Ghost Gables

by Mildred A. Wirt

A suspenseful mystery story for girls, by the author of *The Painted Shield*.

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WHEN tomboy Lois McDonald's curiosity was aroused, it simply had to be satisfied — and at once! And when she learned that the mysterious old house, known as Ghost Gables, was to be occupied, she had to get all the facts about its new tenant promptly.

At Ghost Gables she met pretty Glenna Brockman, who had plans to turn the old house into a dormitory for girls from the adjacent college. Lois supplied her with some of the grim facts about the house — then proceeded, generously, to lend her a helping hand.

Mystery followed mystery as the girls tried to put the house into shape. And the strangest mystery of all was the locked room. The plot really thickened when several different ghosts were to be seen stalking the grounds at night. Added to the existing puzzles was the appearance of the tramp in the nearby woods, a tramp who puzzled Lois and whose identity finally helped to resolve the biggest mystery of all.

An excellent story for girls, complete with a college background and a suspenseful plot, by the author of *The Painted Shield*.

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Ghost Gables

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GHOST GABLES

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by MILDRED A. WIRT

CLEVELAND NEW YORK

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GHOST GABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING LOIS

A TALL, gangling girl in corduroy slacks, turtle-neck sweater and grimy tennis shoes, stood at the edge of the McDonald boat landing and peered intently across the wide blue waters of the Big Bear river. A red canoe, awkwardly propelled by a college freshman and his girl companion, slowly approached the dock.

"Well, thank goodness," sighed Lois. "Love's young dream must end sometime. I thought that River Romeo would never come in."

The freshman tried to bring the canoe to the landing but could not control the craft.

"Swing her sharply or you'll miss the dock," the girl called. "The current is swift here."

Observing that the canoe would certainly float past, Lois seized a long pole and neatly hooked it up to the landing. She steadied the craft while the youth assisted his companion to the platform.

"I didn't realize the current was so strong," he muttered, self-consciously.

"Most people don't," Lois said as she glanced at the

young man's ticket. "You were out four hours to the dot. That will be a dollar even."

She took the money the youth handed to her, and hauling the craft from the water, chained it in the shed with the other rental canoes. Scarcely had she finished the task when a middle-aged man with pleasant gray eyes which matched those of his daughter, came down the steps to the landing.

"Hello, Lois, still here?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes, Dad, one canoe stayed out all morning. Even at that we only took in four dollars and a half."

"Well, it's a chilly fall day," replied Mr. McDonald. "Can't expect to make much this late in the season. We'll be closing the boat house anytime now."

Lois nodded gloomily. She always was sorry when summer came to an end because she enjoyed working at her father's boat house. She loved the winding Big Bear river which flowed through the town, dividing the campus of Ardmore college. During nice weather, scarcely a day elapsed that she did not swim or go canoeing.

"You must have had a tedious morning, Lois," her father remarked, accepting the day's receipts which she counted out.

"Oh, I didn't mind. I've been watching that old house across the river. Dad, I believe someone is moving in after all these years!"

Bill McDonald turned to stare at a large, rambling house studded with gables which was just visible through the trees lining the far shore. For many years the place had stood vacant. The boat landing had rotted half away and the lawn was choked with rubbish and leaves.

"I see no sign of activity, Lois."

"Only a few minutes ago a girl was out in the yard, inspecting the grounds. She didn't look much older than myself. I watched her quite a while through your spy glass."

"Was that a polite thing to do?"

"Not polite, perhaps," grinned Lois, "but practical. I have a notion to paddle over there now and try to get acquainted."

"Aren't you afraid of appearing inquisitive?" her father suggested mildly.

"Oh, I'm not snoopy, Dad," Lois laughed. "Only neighborly."

"I am afraid that is only a verbal compromise," her father answered. "Just a salve for a guilty conscience."

"Well, Dad, what's so wrong about being inquisitive, if you must put it that way? My natural history teacher says that curiosity was what made the first man climb down out of his tree! All progress has been based upon that quality."

"You always manage to win an argument, so I'll

resign before I start," returned her father. "However, allow me to remark that the modern youth is entirely too wise for his years."

"Thank you, Dad, for using the masculine gender," laughed Lois. "Well, snoopy or not, I think I'll just see what is going on over there."

Selecting a canoe with a very narrow bottom, she skilfully launched it. Setting her course directly across the river, she sent the craft gliding smoothly over the water.

At fifteen, Lois was muscular and athletic, her healthy brown skin proclaiming a life spent out-of-doors. She wore her straight, blond hair in a severe bob, and seldom worried about the condition of her clothes or fingernails. A senior in high school, she was still occasionally called, "Tomboy McDonald," and rather gloried in the name.

Reaching the far shore, Lois stepped out on the rotting pier, and pulled the canoe from the water.

She turned to gaze curiously at the gabled house perched high on the knoll. From the upper floor, dust-laden oval windows stared like so many sightless eyes out across the river. The square windows on the lower floor had been boarded up, but now she saw that some of the barriers had been pried away.

"I was right," she thought. "Someone is moving in."

For many years this river property, known to the

townfolk as Ghost Gables, had fascinated Lois. She had spent countless hours speculating upon its history, wondering about the former occupants and why they never returned. The grounds were never tended, and until this day she had observed no one enter or leave the house.

"There has always been some mystery connected with this place," Lois told herself. "Perhaps at last I'll be able to ask a few questions and have them answered."

After a moment, she started up the weed-choked path, stopping short as she emerged into a little clearing. Her gaze swept past two pine trees which stood like ageless sentinels by the rear porch, and on to the ruined cherry and apple orchard where a girl in blue was gathering windfalls. At her side was a large white collie, the most beautiful dog Lois had ever seen.

"Oh, he's handsome!" she exclaimed involuntarily.

Hearing a voice, the girl in blue straightened and glanced over her shoulder. Lois saw that she was several years older than herself, pretty, with eyes and hair the exact color of the leaves which blew helter-skelter in the wind.

"Hello," she said heartily. "What a marvelous collie! What do you call him?"

"Well, I haven't decided yet," the girl responded, smiling at Lois' forth-right manner. "You see, I acquired him only yesterday, and this house as well."

Lois came closer, and bent down to give the dog an affectionate pat.

"I told Dad someone was moving in here," she declared. "My name is Lois McDonald, and my father runs the canoe-renting place just across the river."

"Oh, I see," commented the older girl vaguely. After a moment, she added. "I am Glenna Brockman."

"I suppose your parents have taken over this place," Lois remarked, not in the least bashful about making personal inquiries.

"No, I have no parents," Glenna answered in a quiet voice. "I've rented the house on my own responsibility."

Lois stared in undisguised amazement.

"You don't mean you're going to live here *alone?*"

"Well, I hope not," laughed Glenna. "That would mean financial ruin, and the end of my college career. You see, I'm trying to work my way through Ardmore by operating this place as a rooming house for girl students."

For perhaps the first time in her life, Lois could find no words. Her gaze roved from Glenna's earnest young face, across the disordered grounds to the old house, unpainted and uninviting.

"Oh, I know what you are thinking!" Glenna exclaimed. "It seems like a crazy thing to do. The house is run down and it will take an enormous amount

of work to put it in shape. But I couldn't find another house in Ardmore. And the rent was so low."

"You're a Freshman," Lois said, after a moment.

"Yes, how did you guess?"

Lois avoided a direct answer. Instead she said meditatively: "I'll start in at Ardmore myself next year. I haven't decided yet whether I'll study to be an athletic coach or a doctor. I think about it a lot. But tell me, how did you learn this house was for rent?"

"Oh, it's a long, painful story. I doubt that you would be interested."

"Yes, I would," said Lois.

She sat down on a log, and with one arm wrapped carelessly about the white collie, prepared to listen attentively.

"I came here last week with a hundred and fifty dollars," related Glenna. "I thought everything would be fairly smooth sailing because through the Students' Employment Bureau I already had a job with an interior decorator."

"Not Jake Klooth?"

"Yes, do you know him?"

"Oh, I am acquainted with almost everyone in Ardmore."

"Then perhaps I shouldn't tell you—"

"Oh, Jake is no friend of mine," Lois announced. "Everyone says he is very stingy. He won't hire

regular help but employs students at half pay and discharges them when they ask for a raise."

"Mr. Klooth certainly discharged me," admitted Glenna. "Not because I asked for a higher salary, however. To paraphrase his words, I failed flagrantly in my duty."

"I suppose you forgot to turn off the electric lights or something like that."

"No, it really was my fault. Mr. Klooth sent me out to attend the Ludwig sale with instructions to buy an old maple chest which was being auctioned off. To make a long story short, I saw this lovely collie."

"And you bought him with Mr. Klooth's money?"

"No, I had funds of my own. I bid on the dog, never dreaming I would get him. But I did. I became so excited, I forgot all about the maple chest. By the time I recovered my senses a bit, the chest had been sold. Naturally, you couldn't blame Mr. Klooth for discharging me. I really did fail in my duty."

"I would have bought the collie too," said Lois warmly. "How much did you pay for him?"

"Ten dollars. I shouldn't have spent the money."

"It was a steal at twice the figure! Oh, he's a beauty, Glenna! Why don't you call him Pal?"

"Well—I rather hoped to find a name not quite so common."

"I like Pal."

"Then we'll call him Pal," laughed Glenna, good

naturedly. "At least that will be one less thing for me to worry about."

"You didn't tell me how you came to rent this house," Lois reminded her, quickly switching back to the original subject.

"After I lost my job with Mr. Klooth I didn't know what to do. I was walking along the street when I saw a real estate man putting up a 'For Rent' sign in the yard of this place. Just on the spur of the moment, I asked him about the house. He took me through. It was furnished beautifully, and when he said the rent was only fifty dollars a month, well, I was carried away! I signed on the dotted line, and here I am, mistress of a rooming house!"

"You have your work cut out for you," Lois observed.

"Yes, I scarcely know where to begin. The house must be cleaned from cellar to attic, the windows washed, and the yard raked. I shouldn't be wasting a moment."

"You surely don't intend to do all that work yourself?"

"Oh, I can't afford to hire help. The truth is, I am close to being broke."

"Then how do you expect to run a rooming house?" Lois asked bluntly.

"I admit it will be a problem in mathematics. But I've paid the first month's rent, and my college registration fees. I figure if I can only get four students

to room here, I'll more than break even and have my own housing free."

"Finding the four students may not be so easy," Lois hinted, thoughtfully stroking Pal's back.

"I plan to run an advertisement in the paper."

"That might bring results and again it might not," said Lois. "I wonder why the house was put up for rent after having been vacant so long? Did the real estate agent tell you?"

"No, he didn't even mention the owner's name."

"I imagine he neglected to tell you a few other significant facts," Lois remarked.

"Why, what do you mean?" Glenna inquired in alarm.

"He didn't speak about the reputation of this house?"

"It's reputation?"

"I thought not," nodded Lois. "Well, as long as I can remember, this house has never been occupied. Even if it had been offered for rent I doubt that any Ardmore person would care to live here."

"But why?" Glenna asked in bewilderment. "What is wrong with the house?"

"Ghost Gables is reputed to be haunted."

"Haunted? Who believes in ghosts in this enlightened age?" Glenna plainly was irritated.

"No one, to hear folks tell it," replied Lois gravely. "But just the same, I'm terribly afraid you'll have trouble finding roomers."

CHAPTER II

GHOSTS FOR GLENNA

"You mean no one will stay in this house because it's reputed to be haunted?" Glenna asked in amazement.

"Well, I'd not go so far as to say *no one,*" amended Lois. "Anyway, that's only my opinion."

"But it's ridiculous!"

Lois picked up an apple from the ground, bit into it, and promptly tossed it away. She remained thoughtfully silent.

"I suppose I am easily taken in," Glenna admitted after a moment. "I should have been suspicious when Mr. Clements, the real estate agent, told me the rent was low. So I've acquired a house of ghosts!"

"Only one," smiled Lois. "A very mild little fellow, whose only misdemeanor, according to report, is to wander through the garden now and then, mostly on moonlight nights."

"It all sounds like nonsense. Lois, you're not joking?"

"No, it's the truth."

"Did you ever see the ghost?"

"Oh, I don't take stock in the story myself, Glenna,

but there are plenty of folks in this town who do. Most of the college students have heard the yarn, too."

"How ridiculous for anyone to start such a tale! Just because a house has been closed up a few years—" Glenna broke off and asked quickly: "By the way, how long has the property been vacant?"

"Ever since I can remember. I'd guess at least fifteen years. Probably longer than that."

"Fifteen years! Goodness, then I have rented a lemon!"

"You've rented a mystery," corrected Lois with a chuckle. She tossed a stick far across the yard and watched the collie retrieve it. "Oh, Glenna, doesn't this place fascinate you?"

"It gave me a queer feeling when I first saw it," Glenna confessed in a low voice. "I can't explain, but it seemed to me as if I belonged here. All my life I've pined for a home, a place that was really mine."

"I mean, couldn't you sense the mystery?" Lois demanded. "I used to come here as a kid and speculate upon why the house had been boarded up. Who were the former occupants, and why have they left the place completely furnished all these years?"

"I'm afraid I was so carried away with my idea of starting a rooming house that I didn't ask myself any questions."

Glenna looked up at the sweeping lines of the old roof, broken here and there by shingles in disrepair.

She saw the ancient chimney that rose at the end of the house, encrusted in many a year's growth of matted and twisted vines. And she observed the gables, each jutting out from the sloping roof like the prow of an abandoned galley.

The old dwelling looked deserted, forlorn, abandoned.

"After all, perhaps a ghost or two wouldn't be amiss," she remarked. "At least it might make the place seem less lonely."

"This house is lonely all right," agreed Lois. "But for company I don't believe I would choose a ghost."

Glenna sat down on a log beside the younger girl, digging the toe of her shoe into the loose earth.

"Sometimes I wonder if I am fated to be a failure in life," she said presently in a subdued voice. "I've wasted what little money I had, and I'll never be able to remain at Ardmore. Oh, what's the use?"

Rising quickly, she picked up the basket of apples and started toward the house.

"Please don't go!" pleaded Lois, springing up and running after her. "I didn't mean to discourage you."

Glenna paused but she kept her face averted.

"I may as well meet facts squarely," she answered. "You have merely told me the truth."

"Yes, but I could have softened it a bit. I'm terribly blunt, you know."

"It would have all added up to the same thing. The

house is in dreadful condition. I was trying to make myself believe that other factors were more important. But this ghost story is something I can't ignore."

"You're not giving up the place?" Lois asked, alarmed that her words could have carried such weight.

"What else is there for me to do?"

"Well, I don't know, but I don't want you to leave because of what I said."

"If I can't find roomers, I am defeated before I start. I may as well pack my suitcase and go back to Aunt Edith in the country. She'll always give me room and board if I can't get work."

"You're beaten if you take that attitude," Lois said quietly.

"What would you have me do? Should I stay here and try to capture an imaginary ghost?"

"If college meant as much to me as it does to you, a thousand ghosts couldn't drive me away."

"Oh, I'm not frightened," Glenna returned, slightly nettled. "It's purely a case of money. If I can't find roomers, then I'll have no means of support."

"Maybe we'll be able to corral a few roomers for you."

"But you just said—"

"There are more ways than one to skin a cat, Glenna. Now I figure your best chance will be with the Freshmen. They're green as grass, and if you advertise this

house as a home with 'college tradition,' they might lap it up. Like yourself, they'll have no suspicion anything is wrong."

"They'll learn soon enough."

"Well, we'll meet that problem when we come to it."

"But it doesn't seem exactly honest to deceive the students," Glenna protested. "I should explain—"

"Listen to me," interrupted Lois in her most business-like manner, "it's this way. We have twenty canoes at our renting dock. Six of them are dandies —narrow bottoms, built for speed. But the others are wide and flat. Safe as a church but slow as a terrapin. If we explained the difference to every student we'd have fourteen perfectly good canoes in dry dock. Get the idea?"

"Yes," smiled Glenna.

"Now let's get down to practical figures," Lois went on briskly. "How much money do you have?"

"Less than forty-five dollars. I have textbooks to buy, and they will cost three times the amount I figured."

"Try Eby's second-hand book store on Clinton street," Lois advised. "Tell him I sent you."

"Thank you for the suggestion. Even with second-hand books, my problem isn't solved. The house needs so many things, curtains and new spreads for

the beds. I noticed this morning that the furnace doesn't work well, and something seems to be wrong with the hot water heater."

Lois shook her head and frowned. "That's really serious, Glenna. You can't run a rooming house without plenty of heat and hot water."

"The bin is half full of coal—an inheritance from the former owner. But even so, I don't see how I can manage. I simply didn't realize what I was up against."

Before Lois could think of an encouraging reply, the girls heard footsteps. Turning, they saw that a well-dressed man in brown felt hat and overcoat had entered the yard. He bowed to both Glenna and Lois, addressing himself to the former.

"Good morning, Miss Brockman. I dropped in to inquire how you are getting along. Is everything quite satisfactory?"

"Well, no, it isn't," Glenna responded. "Mr. Clements, I've been hearing stories about this place. Disturbing tales of ghosts who nightly wander through the garden."

The real estate agent's gaze swung hard upon Lois, who without waiting to be accused, said with a broad grin: "Yes, I'm the tattle-tale. You know as well as I do, Mr. Clements, that this wreck of a house isn't worth fifty dollars a month. Why, the furnace is out of whack, and the hot water heater won't work. The

yard should be cleaned up. I assume the furniture is all moth-eaten and—"

"You assume entirely too much, young lady," said Mr. Clements sternly. He turned his back upon Lois, and addressed Glenna again: "I don't know what this little imp has been telling you, but any talk of ghosts is sheer nonsense. There is no mystery connected with this lovely old house. It was closed up some years ago, and for purely personal reasons, the owner decided not to rent or sell. I admit, a story has circulated about ghosts, but there is absolutely no basis for a claim that the house is haunted."

"Just the same, such a story will not improve my chance of finding student roomers," replied Glenna.

"As for the furnace and the hot water heater," went on Mr. Clements hurriedly, "I will send a man around to inspect them. If repairs are needed, I feel certain the owner will take care of the matter."

"Just who does own the house anyway?" Lois inquired, refusing to feel snubbed. "I've heard so many different stories."

"An elderly woman who lives in the East—a Mrs. Sarah Reid."

"I wonder if she could be any relation to the Reids who live in University Circle?"

"No, she isn't," responded Mr. Clements, trying to hide his impatience. "The woman wrote several days ago, requesting that I rent the house at a fair price—"

"Ah!" said Lois alertly.

"I consider fifty dollars a low figure," went on the real estate agent, ignoring the interruption. "The house is filled with wonderful furniture. That brings to mind a request made by Mrs. Reid. She asked me to rent the place only to a person who would take good care of everything, but especially the paintings."

"I'll be careful," promised Glenna. "That is, if I decide to stay."

"You're not thinking of leaving because of that ghost story?" Mr. Clements questioned anxiously.

"And for other reasons," contributed Lois, before Glenna could speak. "In the first place, considering the run-down condition of the house, and that you couldn't possibly rent it to anyone in Ardmore, the rent is much too high."

"Young lady," the agent said sternly, "I don't recollect that anyone asked your opinion."

"I agree with everything she says, Mr. Clements," Glenna declared with sudden spirit. "I can't possibly pay more than forty dollars now that I've thought it over. If I am to stay, you must repair the furnace, attend to the heater, and send a man to clean up the yard."

"You should have made these requests yesterday before the papers were signed, Miss Brockman."

"I didn't realize how much was wrong with the place then. And I hadn't heard about the ghost."

"Come now, Mr. Clements," Lois said coaxingly. "Why pretend you're such a Shylock? Glenna hasn't very much money, and she's trying to work her way through college. You have a daughter at Vassar so you must know that getting an education is an expensive proposition."

"I do know," agreed Mr. Clements grimly.

"Then be a good scout and cut the rent."

"All right, you win, Lois," Mr. Clements laughed. Turning to Glenna he said: "I'll make it forty dollars, subject to Mrs. Reid's approval. And this time you really are getting a bargain, Miss Brockman."

"I'll take very good care of everything," promised Glenna.

Reminded by Lois who never overlooked financial details, Mr. Clements gave the girl a ten dollar refund, and then hastily escaped before additional requests could be made.

"Well, we bested Mr. Joe Clements," Lois chuckled when the agent had vanished.

"You did," corrected Glenna, smiling. "I do hope Mr. Clements will bear you no grudge."

"Why should he?" Lois demanded blankly. "Oh, you don't know Joe! He and I are old friends."

"I'd never have suspected it. Is there any person in this town, or anything about it that you don't know?"

"Yes," admitted Lois with a sigh, "this old Reid house has me completely baffled. For years I've been

dying to get inside and look around but all the windows were tightly boarded."

"Well, at least I have the power to satisfy such a modest wish," smiled Glenna. "I'll promptly invite you to step into my castle and view all the cobwebs."

"Oh, I'd love to see the house from cellar to attic!" Lois cried jubilantly. "I'll help you clean it!"

"That is kind of you," Glenna returned, rather touched by the generous offer.

"Oh, I'm being utterly selfish," Lois laughed. "You see, I figure if I help you clean the place, I'll be able to prowl around to my heart's content. I just know there's some deep, dark mystery connected with the house, if only I can ferret it out!"

"Mr. Clements assured us there was no mystery. And I rather hope he is right. One garden ghost is just about all I can cope with at present."

Glenna saw that Lois was not listening to her words. The younger girl's gaze had focused on the high, untrimmed privet hedge which ran the length of the yard, serving as a formidable barrier between Ghost Gables and the adjoining property. She had noted a slight movement of the bushes, and glimpsed a bit of pink cloth through the foliage.

"Don't glance toward the hedge now," Lois warned in a whisper. "We have an eavesdropper. She has been listening to every word we've said!"

CHAPTER III

A HOUSE OF MYSTERY

ALTHOUGH Lois had spoken in a low tone, her words apparently carried to the woman in pink gingham who stood by the hedge, for she straightened up so that her face was visible above the foliage.

"I was just tying my shoe lace," she remarked, moving toward the girls.

"How do you do, Mrs. Horn," said Lois sweetly. "Lovely day, isn't it?"

Two bright spots of color burned the housewife's plump cheeks, but she remained perfectly composed. Always concerned with the "doings" of her neighbors, Mrs. Jennie Horn, a middle aged widow who lived next door to the boarded-up house, had no suspicion that they, in turn, rated her as an incurable gossip. However, she had not heard Lois speak of her as an eavesdropper.

"I just said to myself when I looked out the window this morning, 'Jennie, I do believe you have a new neighbor,'" Mrs. Horn declared brightly, staring at Glenna with frank curiosity. "Lois, you *might* introduce me."

"Mrs. Horn, meet Glenna Brockman," Lois mumbled awkwardly. Introductions never failed to confuse and make her feel socially inept. She wished fervently that she had her companion's charm and ease.

Glenna had returned Mrs. Horn's greeting, and chatted with her as comfortably as if she were an old friend. She did not take offense at the woman's direct questions, but parried them with a cordial smile.

"Yes, I have rented the house for a month," she declared. "A picturesque old place, isn't it? I love these great maple trees, and the river flowing at my doorstep."

"The house may be picturesque," Mrs. Horn replied, mispronouncing the word Glenna had used, "but I can tell you there's plenty wrong with it. I suppose you know the roof leaks? And one of the rain-pipes is broken. It pours water over on my property."

"I'll speak to the real estate agent about it," Glenna promised.

"I couldn't help hearing what you said a moment ago, about running a rooming house," the woman went on, her round, fat face drawing into tight, unfriendly lines. "You're making a big mistake in my opinion."

Lois would have told Mrs. Horn that her advice had not been requested, but Glenna's way was more tactful. She inquired pleasantly: "Just what do you mean, Mrs. Horn?"

"Another rooming house in the neighborhood will create a nuisance. These giddy college girls sit up half

the night having fudge parties, laughing and talking."

"Why, Mrs. Horn," Lois remarked, unable to restrain herself longer. "Didn't you keep roomers yourself only three years ago?"

"Yes. That's why I know exactly what I'm talking about! And I tell you, I kept those girls in hand. I laid down the law the very first day. 'No cooking in your rooms, girls,' I told them. 'In by ten o'clock every night or I report to the Dean. No boys parked in the parlor after eight o'clock.' Oh, I made them walk the chalk line!"

"I'm sure you did," Lois muttered under her breath.

Mrs. Horn turned again to Glenna, saying with stress: "A rooming house may be all right if you know how to handle girls, but you're too young to keep them under control. It's written all over you that you would be too easy."

"My appearance may be deceiving," Glenna replied.

She was losing patience with Mrs. Horn, and felt she could not endure a great deal more. Everything had gone wrong since her arrival at Ardmore. In taking the house she might have made a serious error of judgment, but the mistake concerned only herself.

"I'll speak to Mr. Clements about the rain-pipe," she said, to terminate the conversation.

Even then Mrs. Horn would have lingered, but the two girls turned away, and with the collie at their heels, went toward the house. When they were in the cellar-

way, with the door closed behind them, Lois confided:

"The trouble with Mrs. Horn is that she's very nosey. And she likes to manage everything."

"She must be unpopular in the neighborhood."

"On the contrary, she's very popular. You see, she's better than a newspaper at dishing up gossip, and folks love it, no matter what they say! She's a marvelous cook, and always helps out at church suppers, club affairs and the like. If you happen to be in her good graces she'll do almost anything for you."

"If I read the signs correctly, I am not in her good graces."

"Well, she didn't sound very friendly," Lois admitted. "Probably on account of the rooming house idea—it was just like her to listen by the hedge! And she hates dogs."

"Then I can see we're going to get along marvelously," Glenna said with irony.

She opened a door at the head of the dark stairway, and stepped back so that Lois could enter the kitchen ahead of her.

"You'll have to excuse the appearance," she apologized. "I've barely started my battle against dirt."

The room in which Lois found herself was fairly modern. Built-in cupboards occupied the north wall, and an old fashioned ice chest stood in a small recess. The sink was badly stained, but the gas stove, although an antique model, appeared to be in good condition.

Glenna opened the cupboards to show Lois the dishes which were stacked there. All were heavily coated with dust.

They went on to the dining room where a great candelabrum, which hung from the ceiling, drew Lois' eye. An enormous sideboard stood against the west wall, loaded with beautiful plates, odd-shaped pieces of pottery, and choice articles of silver. Everything on the sideboard had been carefully washed and polished.

"When I saw all those lovely old things, I couldn't resist starting in there," Glenna said. "It gave me a thrill just to handle such dishes."

Lois went over to the sideboard, and picking up one of the plates, examined it curiously.

"This was made in Italy," she declared. "And these other things look as if they might have been gathered from all over the world."

"Oh, the person who lived in this house, was an individual of culture and good taste," Glenna replied. "One sees evidence of it everywhere. Just step into the living room."

"It gives me a thrill to be inside this place," Lois said in awe, following her companion. "All my life I've wondered what it would be like, but I never imagined it would be half as nice as this!"

"Do you wonder I lost my head when the real estate man offered it to me?"

"No, I don't. At first I thought it was a crazy thing

to do, but I've changed my mind. Yet why would anyone go away and leave all these marvelous things unguarded so many years?"

"It does seem strange," Glenna acknowledged. "I know a little about furniture. Notice that old oak secretary. And the cabinet by the window. Also those fiddle-back chairs. An antique dealer would pay a pretty penny for them, I'm sure."

Lois wandered slowly about the living room, staring at the fireplace with its dust-laden andirons, at the paintings on the wall, at the great square piano with yellowed keys.

"Glenna," she said softly, "I've often thought so, and now I'm sure! Something happened in this house—I mean some dreadful thing which caused the owner to go away suddenly without taking time to protect the furniture."

"You may be right," Glenna admitted. "Upstairs in one of the bedrooms I found clothing still hanging in the closet. When I touched a garment it was so old it practically disintegrated in my hand."

"I wish I knew just when this house was boarded up! Oh, it torments me because no one around Ardmore seems to know anything about the place."

"You might inquire from your newsy friend, Mrs. Horn," Glenna suggested, smiling.

"Say, that's sort of queer, isn't it?" Lois demanded, startled by a sudden thought. "You know, I don't recall

that Mrs. Horn ever said very much about this place. Yet she's lived next door to Ghost Gables ever since I can remember."

"Perhaps she just takes the house for granted."

"Mrs. Horn never took anything for granted in her life!"

"Well, then it looks to me as if you've neglected a good source of information."

"Yes, I have," agreed Lois earnestly. "I'll start working on her right away. If anyone in town knows what happened in this house it would be Mrs. Horn! Oh, I'll never rest until I learn the entire story!"

"And I'll have no peace of mind until I get Ghost Gables cleaned," Glenna sighed. "It's such a big job. I scarcely know where to start."

"I'll help you," Lois offered eagerly. "I'm not much good at dainty tasks like dusting, but I can wash windows and clean cupboards. Where are your rags and things?"

"In the cellarway, but you'll ruin your clothes."

"Not these old slacks," Lois laughed.

She located a bucket and since the water had not been turned on in the house, filled it at the river. While Glenna swept the dining room, creating a great cloud of dust, Lois attacked the kitchen windows. As the girls worked, they kept up a running fire of conversation. Lois learned that Glenna's parents had been dead several years; she had lived first with one aunt and then

another, never spending more than a year at one place.

"Aunt Edith has been especially kind to me," Glenna said, "but I realize I've always been a burden. That's why it will be so hard to go back and admit defeat. She gave me a hundred and fifty dollars, and we both thought it would see me through a year of college, if I had a job. Well, I lost the job the very first day, because I was crazy enough to buy a dog! And I've not had courage enough to write my aunt about this latest mistake."

"It may not be a mistake," Lois replied, vigorously polishing a window pane. "As for Pal, he'll keep you company in this great barn of a house."

"Yes," Glenna agreed. "I've always wanted a dog of my own, and I never had one. But I didn't realize how much they eat. It's the truth I've fed Pal more than I have myself."

"You could sell him maybe." Lois' eyes brightened. "Or why don't you let me have him just until you get settled! I'll take good care of Pal, and see that he has three square meals a day!"

"It would be an imposition upon you."

"No, it wouldn't," Lois insisted. "I'd love to have Pal, and I'll give him back whenever you say the word. I'm real good at taking care of dogs."

"I don't know much about them myself."

"They have to be cared for just like babies," Lois said discouragingly. "You bathe them, take them for long

walks, and brush their hair—Pal has a lot of it too! You feed 'em a well balanced diet so they won't get sick, and try to keep 'em out of the neighbors' flowerbeds—"

"That's enough, Lois. I realize I have no business with a dog."

"Then it's a bargain?"

"Well, yes, but if Pal proves to be too much for you, just bring him back any time."

"Oh, we'll get along together," Lois said with confidence.

The windows finished, she mounted a high stool and began cleaning the kitchen cupboards. Glenna could hear the musical clink of chinaware as she removed dishes from the cupboards. And then for a time all was silent.

Suddenly Glenna was startled by an unearthly yell. She darted to the kitchen door in time to see the stool and Lois, a cup in one hand, a newspaper in the other, toppling toward the floor.

Glenna could not save the girl, and she crashed to the floor. Arms and legs waved in the air, and then Lois sat up, unwound herself from the stool and grinned.

"Didn't even smash the cup, Glenna!"

"You're lucky you didn't break your neck. I wish you wouldn't risk climbing that stool again. Those wiggly legs are unsafe."

"Oh, I just reached out too far. I was after this newspaper on the top shelf! Glenna, look at it!"

She spread the yellow news sheet on the sink so that the older girl could read the headlines. They were in block letters two inches high:

'WAR DECLARED IN EUROPE.'

"Well, that is an old paper!" Glenna exclaimed.

"The date says 1914. More than a quarter of a century ago."

"Goodness, has it been that long since the outbreak of World War I? It doesn't seem possible. Why, my father was with the famous Rainbow Division."

"The papers on the other shelves are even older," Lois went on, her enthusiasm mounting. "But they're not so interesting. Did you find any, Glenna?"

"Any what, Lois?" Glenna's mind was still on the war.

"Newspapers."

"Oh, yes, scads of them. Some are still in the basement. I didn't have time to burn them."

"Thank goodness for that!" Lois exclaimed, starting for the cellarway. "A fine detective you'd make!"

In a fever of excitement, she rushed to the basement, returning in a moment with an armful of newspapers, dusty and yellow with age. She spread them out on the linoleum, and dropping down on her hands and knees, eagerly examined the various datelines.

"You're as dirty as if you'd been playing in the coal

bin!" Glenna laughed. "There's a black streak across your face."

Lois absently rubbed the back of her hand across her cheek, leaving still another mark, as she cried:

"All of these papers are old, Glenna! But that one I found on the cupboard shelf bears the latest date! Oh, I just knew I'd stumble into something important, if ever I managed to get inside this old house!"

"It's interesting to see a paper which dates back to the World War," replied Glenna, "but just what bearing does it have upon your so-called mystery?"

"Don't you see? I guessed that this house might have been closed up for fifteen years. Well, I missed it by about ten years. These newspapers are proof positive that the place was vacated soon after the outbreak of the war. Doesn't it excite you to think what could have happened here? Oh, I'd like to examine every scrap of evidence I can find, piece it all together, and try to learn the story!"

A twinkle came into Glenna's blue eyes.

"In that case," she suggested, "I know a very good place to start. I didn't think of it until a moment ago, but in the library you will find something which I consider really *queer.*"

CHAPTER IV

ADVICE NOT REQUESTED

Lois promptly scrambled up from the floor, pushing the newspapers carelessly aside.

"What have you found, Glenna?" she asked eagerly.

"I'll show you."

Glenna led the way through the living room, and turned the knob of a paneled door opening from it. The girls stepped down into a small room, the walls of which were lined high with leather bound books. Lois gave a little sigh of delight, for she loved to read, and the thought instantly flashed through her mind that here was a haven, which when properly cleaned and renovated, would be her own refuge from the world.

"You're not looking at the right place," said Glenna.

Lois' gaze wandered to the far end of the room where the smoke-blackened chimney of a fireplace rose in graceful lines to blend with the ceiling. Above the mantel hung a large picture in a dark wooden frame.

Glenna moved to the window, drawing the dusty velvet curtain. In the dimly lighted room, Lois had been unable to distinguish the character of the picture, but now as the warm sun shone full upon the plaster

wall, she understood the reason. She had been gazing not at the face of the painting, but at its back.

"A picture turned to the wall!" she gasped. "Do you suppose it was left that way on purpose?"

"Yes, I do," replied Glenna. "When first I came into this room, a chair was setting close to the hearth, its back to the fireplace, just as if someone had stepped up on it to turn the picture around."

"Is it a portrait of a person, Glenna?"

"I've not even looked," the older girl confessed. "You see, Mr. Clements was with me when I first noticed it, and I didn't care to display undue curiosity. Later, I was so busy I forgot."

Lois moved a ladder-back chair across the room, and mounting, untwisted the heavy silken ropes from which the heavy picture was suspended.

"Be careful," Glenna warned. "Those cords are so old they might break."

Lois cautiously turned the picture, and both girls were held speechless as they gazed at it. The massive frame held a portrait of a little boy, an intelligent looking child with friendly blue eyes and golden hair, who could not have been older than thirteen or fourteen. His mischievous smile made Lois feel as if a vital presence had taken possession of the library.

"Well, did you ever!" she exclaimed after a moment. "Glenna, why do you suppose this picture was turned with its face to the wall?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Perhaps the boy had done something which deeply offended his parents."

"That's exactly what I think!" Lois declared, her gaze upon the portrait. "It must have been something perfectly dreadful, too. Oh, Glenna, maybe this boy is Mrs. Reid's son!"

"Very possible."

"The boy may have disgraced her in some way, and she turned his picture to the wall! Then she closed up the house and went away."

"Perhaps," Glenna admitted, smiling because her companion was so carried away by her theory.

"What do you suppose he did to offend his mother?"

"Oh, I don't know," Glenna answered. "What do boys ordinarily do to bring down the parental wrath?"

"They marry the wrong girl."

"Not at the age of fourteen."

"This picture may have been painted years before the offense was committed," Lois remarked thoughtfully.

"Yes, that's true. It isn't likely a mother could hold a bitter feeling toward a mere boy."

"He disgraced the family name somehow," Lois went on. "Perhaps he stole something."

"At any rate," concluded Glenna, "I am very much afraid we'll never know the answer, so we might as well stop thinking about it."

"Oh, I haven't really started to work on the mystery yet!"

The mention of work reminded Glenna of the many things which remained to be done.

"I'll have to get back to my toil," she said with a sigh. "If I don't keep at it this house won't be ready for occupancy by the end of next week."

Lois reluctantly followed her new friend from the library.

"I'll start on the living room next," Glenna declared briskly. "The rug should be taken outside and beaten."

"I'll do the job while you clean the floors," Lois volunteered.

They carried the rug into the yard and stretched it on the grass. Dirt was deeply embedded in the thick pile, but there were no moth holes, for insect life had been unable to survive the freezing winter temperatures in an unheated house.

Lois pounded with vigor, and as the great cloud of dust gradually grew less, she glanced toward the house next door. Mrs. Horn was watching from the window.

"Nothing escapes that woman," Lois thought.

Rolling up the rug, she slung it over her shoulder, and staggered back into the house. Glenna had mopped the floors and had swept the cobwebs from the ceilings.

"This is beginning to look like a home again," she said when the rug was laid. "Only I think the room would seem larger if we rearranged the furniture."

"Let's try the davenport opposite the fireplace," suggested Lois. "That's the way Mother has it at home."

Together they pushed and carried the heavy piece of furniture across the room, and then stood back to admire the effect.

"We might try the secretary against the east wall," Glenna suggested thoughtfully.

As they lifted it, the glass doors which were not fastened well, swung open and a crumpled newspaper tumbled to the floor. Lois stooped to pick it up, automatically glancing at the headlines.

"Well, this washes up my theory about the house being closed in 1914!" she exclaimed.

Peering over Lois' shoulder, Glenna saw that the paper bore a 1917 date, and announced in bold type America's entry into the World War. The front page had been torn and there was a large blot of ink across the right hand column.

"Can't you reconstruct the scene?" Lois cried jubilantly. "Someone was sitting at this secretary, perhaps writing a letter about the disturbing news contained in the paper. In his agitation he spilled the ink!"

"He?"

"Oh, I'm speaking grammatically!" Lois laughed. "My guess would be that the person was Mrs. Reid. I wonder if she closed up the house in 1917? There should be some old letters in this secretary."

"I wouldn't want to read them," Glenna murmured.

Paying no heed, Lois ransacked the desk, but she was disappointed to find that all letters and papers had been

removed from the pigeonholes. There was an empty ink bottle, several rusty pens, and a blotter—nothing more.

Lois glanced carefully at the blotter, and was pleased to note that despite the passage of years, a line of writing stood out as clearly as upon the day it had been imprinted there. She held it to the mirror by the staircase, and could then make out the words.

"'How—could—you—Terry,'" she read slowly aloud. "Now who might Terry be?"

"You tell me, Lois," Glenna laughed. "You seem to have talent for this question and answer affair."

"No, my theories are becoming more involved every minute. But Terry must have done something which displeased the writer of the letter. Glenna, perhaps Terry is the little boy whose picture was turned to the wall!"

"If the Reid family lived in Ardmore very many years, there should be someone in the town who would know their history."

"That's the way it always seemed to me," Lois said gloomily, "but I never could learn a thing. Mrs. Horn may know, but for some perverse reason—"

She did not finish, for Glenna who was standing near the window, broke in warningly:

"Speaking of Mrs. Horn, here she comes now!"

A moment later they heard an imperative thump-thump-thump on the back door.

"Let's make a lot of noise and pretend we don't hear," Lois whispered, but Glenna shook her head and went to admit the visitor.

"I just ran over to tell you that your dog—" Mrs. Horn spoke with an unpleasant stress—"that animal is over in my flower bed. I've driven him off twice now, and I can't have it!"

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry," Glenna began, conscience-stricken, but Lois had reached the door and promptly took command.

"Pal is my dog," she announced.

"Your dog?" echoed Mrs. Horn skeptically.

"Yes, I gained possession about an hour ago. I'll chase over and get the scamp. Only I can't see he's doing any harm. He's just looking at your chrysanthemums with a bored air."

"He hasn't done any damage," Mrs. Horn admitted, "but that's because I've watched him."

Lois smiled tolerantly, and stepping out on the porch whistled to the collie. When he did not come, she squeezed through a gap in the hedge, and dragged him back by force to Ghost Gables.

During the girl's absence, Mrs. Horn had found an excuse to enter the house.

"Dear me, you're not moving the furniture around!" she exclaimed disapprovingly, just as Lois returned to the living room with Pal.

"Yes, we thought it might make the room seem

larger, more modern, you know," Glenna replied. "I was thinking of trying the piano over by the window."

"It's very bad for a piano to be set against an outside wall," Mrs. Horn said primly. "Mrs. Reid always kept it just where it is now."

"Did you know Mrs. Reid?" Lois interposed in an eager voice.

"Certainly."

"What was she like?"

"A very charming, cultured woman."

"And her husband?"

"Her husband?" Mrs. Horn repeated blankly. "I'm sure I can't tell you, because I never met him. She lived in this house with her brother, a distinguished professor —and the boy, of course."

"The little fellow with golden curls?" Lois asked. "The boy whose picture hangs in the library?"

"Yes." Mrs. Horn's answers were noticeably brief.

"And his name was Terry?" persisted Lois.

"It was, but I can't understand why you're so interested. The family moved away years and years ago."

"Just when did they leave?" Lois questioned.

"I don't remember."

"Could it have been in 1917?"

"Well, yes, maybe that was the year," Mrs. Horn admitted reluctantly.

"And was the house closed up right after the newspapers announced our entry into the War."

"I couldn't tell you," Mrs. Horn responded shortly. "I was out of the city when Mrs. Reid went away."

"Then you must be able to recall the time," Lois insisted.

"Well, I can't," Mrs. Horn said in a harassed voice. She began to edge toward the door.

"Just one more question, Mrs. Horn." Mischief glinted in Lois' eyes. "Why was Terry's picture turned with its face to the wall? What did he do that so offended his mother?"

Mrs. Horn's astonishment was genuine. "Terry's picture turned to the wall?"

"Yes."

"Well, I never knew that," the woman murmured as if to herself. And then, resuming her natural tone, she added: "I really must be going. I have some jelly boiling on the stove."

She retreated through the back door, and scurried across the yard to her own home.

"That's one way to get rid of her," Lois chuckled. "Just start asking her questions about Mrs. Reid."

"You went at her rather abruptly, didn't you?" Glenna inquired, smiling.

"I always like to dig right to the heart of a subject," Lois grinned. "Anyway, she's usually willing enough to talk. But for some reason she doesn't care to tell us about Ghost Gables."

"Mrs. Horn heartily disapproves of me. I can sense

it by the way she acts, and I seemed to add fuel to the flame by changing this furniture around."

"Oh, who cares how she feels?" Lois scoffed. "It made me disgusted the way she acted about Pal. Why, he hadn't even rolled in her old chrysanthemum bed!"

"I guess it's fortunate you're taking the collie home with you," Glenna sighed.

"I wonder what time it is?" Lois inquired anxiously. "We ought to get some of the clocks running."

"It must be after four o'clock."

"As late as that! I've had no lunch, and Mother will think I've fallen into the river. I'll have to run."

"A million thanks for all you've done, Lois."

"Oh, I'll be back tomorrow. Come along, Pal."

Glenna walked with Lois toward the river. As they emerged from the trees, the younger girl stopped short, staring at the pier.

"Where's my canoe?" she demanded.

"Could it have floated away?"

"Floated away like fun! Look out there!"

Indignantly, Lois gestured toward a red canoe some distance upstream which was being paddled by a girl in a white sweater. Another girl sat in the bow.

"They've taken your canoe?" Glenna asked incredulously.

"They certainly have!"

The two girls on the water were not yet aware that they were under observation. Evidently deciding to

change seats, so that the one who had been sitting in the bow might paddle, they started shifting positions. The canoe wobbled dangerously.

"Haven't they an ounce of sense!" Lois exclaimed.

She cupped her hands to her mouth, intending to shout a warning, but before it could be uttered the craft gave a final, convulsive jerk and capsized. With shrill squeals of terror, the two girls were pitched into the rushing water.

CHAPTER V

A DIFFICULT ROOMER

GLENNA was so paralyzed by fear that she could not have made a move to aid the unfortunate girls. Lois, upon the contrary, having been raised along the river, was a Red Cross Lifesaver, and thoroughly familiar with the slogan, "row, throw, tow, go!" painstakingly drilled into her by a brawny lifeguard. During the years she had worked at her father's dock she had pulled no less than ten ungrateful persons out of the Big Bear, so that by this time a rescue was not a rescue unless done with suitable "technique."

If one had a pole handy, one merely extended it, and hauled the victim to shore. If a boat or canoe were available, one coolly rowed out and towed the person ashore. In the last resort, one fell back upon the unpleasant expedient of swimming out and inviting a strangle hold.

Now, as Lois ran to the end of the pier, she recognized that last resort methods were the order of the day. The two girls had come to the surface and were floundering in deep water, neither of them able to swim. The overturned canoe floated barely a foot away.

"Grab hold!" Lois shouted as she kicked off her shoes.

One of the girls seemed to understand the command, for she thrashed the water violently for a moment, and then managed to clutch the bottom of the canoe, clinging to it with a tenacious grip as she choked and coughed up water.

The other girl easily could have saved herself in the same manner, but did not have sufficient presence of mind. Lois dived feet first from the pier, because she was unfamiliar with the water depth, and with a smooth, unhurried crawl stroke, swam out toward the overturned canoe.

The girl's struggles were becoming weaker, she noted, coming up for air. That was just as well. Then she'd show less fight, and be much easier to tow back to shore. Even for a strong swimmer, it was not easy to carry another person seventy-five yards in the river, especially one who wore heavy clothing.

Lois had timed her arrival perfectly. As the drowning girl's hands fluttered feebly, she approached fast, seized a wrist, and with a quick leg kick and a mighty pull, swung the limp figure into position for a cross-chest carry.

"Hang on," she told the other girl who clung to the canoe. "I'll come back for you."

She started toward shore with her rescued subject. Now and then as a little wave would sweep over the

girl's face, she would struggle violently for a moment.

"Lie still, you're all right," Lois told her reassuringly.

The girl was heavy and awkward to carry and each yard she seemed to take on additional weight. Lois was puffing a bit before shore was reached. Glenna, as white as a ghost, helped her lift the girl from the water.

"Shall I run for a doctor?" she asked nervously.

"It won't be necessary," Lois replied, with a critical glance at the dark-haired girl who was lying exhausted on the sand. "She'll be all right."

Leaving Glenna to wonder helplessly what one did in such a situation, she dived into the water again and swam back to the overturned canoe. The current had carried it some distance downstream.

"I thought you would never come back," gasped the bedraggled one.

"Just hold on, and I'll give you a free ride," Lois told her cheerfully. "I'll tow both you and the canoe at the same time. It will be easier than making another trip."

It was not "easy" Lois soon discovered, for the craft was heavier than she had thought it would be, but whenever she grew breathless, she turned on her back and rested a moment. Presently shore was reached.

"Thank you! Thank you!" the girl murmured after Lois had helped her wade through the shallow water to the beach. "Is Marj all right?"

"If Marj is your dark-haired friend, she seems to be fine," Lois answered, wringing water from her clothes. "How do you feel?"

"I must have swallowed a barrel of water."

"I know the feeling," grinned Lois. She pulled the canoe from the water and overturned it so that it would dry out.

"My, but you swim well," said her companion admiringly.

"I should. I've lived around water all my life."

"You probably know all about canoes, too?"

"Well, I should know something about this particular one," Lois replied dryly. "It happens to be mine."

"Oh! I didn't realize—that is—well, you see Marj suggested taking the canoe just for a lark—her name is Marjory Bennett."

"And your name?" inquired Lois, amused at the other's embarrassment.

"Marcia Allen. I should like to explain how it happened. You see, we were walking along the shore, wishing we had something to do. We saw the canoe and the urge came to see if we could paddle it."

"I understand. Folks get urges to try Dad's canoes too without paying the fee. That's why we keep them padlocked."

"I hope you don't think we intended to steal the canoe!"

"I am sure you didn't," Lois said in a more gracious tone.

"Such a thing never entered our minds."

"I take it you were never in a canoe before?"

"Never," Marcia confessed. "And I hope I never am again!"

"Oh, it's fun if you know how," Lois said carelessly. "Come along, let's see how your friend is doing."

They walked up the beach to where Glenna was rubbing the dark-haired girl's hands, trying to restore circulation. She had removed her own sweater and had wrapped it about the other's shoulders.

"Oh, I feel sick to my stomach," the girl moaned.

"You'll be all right in a minute or two," Lois told her. "Glenna and I will help you to the house."

They lifted the girl to her feet, but she took a few steps and collapsed weakly against them.

"Oh, come now," declared Lois impatiently, "you didn't swallow very much water. You'll simply have to walk, because we can't carry you."

"I think I should call a doctor," Glenna said anxiously.

"All right," Lois agreed unwillingly.

She was certain that Marjory Bennett was only hysterical, trying to dramatize the rescue, but it was better to be safe.

However, Glenna's suggestion brought a sudden improvement in the girl's condition.

"Never mind the doctor," she said hastily. "I guess I can walk."

She went steadily up the path, scarcely leaning on Lois' supporting arm.

At Ghost Gables, Glenna led the girls in the back way, and while they waited in the kitchen, hastened upstairs to find dry clothing. Lois lighted the gas stove, and opened the oven door so that it would throw heat out into the room. Discovering water in the teakettle, she set it on to boil.

"I'll have a hot drink for you in a jiffy," she promised. "Then you'll feel better."

"How about yourself?" inquired Marcia, smiling. "You're just as wet and uncomfortable as we are."

"Yes, but I don't mind it. I often get my clothes soaked working at the boat dock."

"This was a dreadful ordeal," complained Marjory. "I'll probably have a bad cold and be in bed a week."

"It seems to me we should be grateful we're still alive," declared Marcia pointedly. She removed her water-soaked shoes and set them in front of the oven to dry. "I don't believe you've even said thank you for being spared a watery grave."

"I told you I was grateful, didn't I?" asked Marjory.

"Well, I don't remember," answered Lois. "Maybe you did."

"I just took it for granted. I am grateful, of course."

"Are you girls students at Ardmore?" Lois asked quickly.

"Yes," Marcia nodded. "We're freshmen. We registered this morning."

"I don't think I shall care for college either," said Marjory. "I couldn't get the music courses I wished, and the house where we've taken rooms has no piano."

Lois gazed speculatively at the two girls and had they known her well they would have suspected that an idea was taking root in her mind.

"Have you signed up for a full term at your rooming place?" she asked.

"No, only a week," returned Marcia. "We thought we might look around a little more."

"I should like to find a place where one isn't compelled to be in by ten o'clock every night," Marjory added.

"Rules are enforced almost everywhere," Lois said, and added craftily: "But I admit some landladies are worse than others. Why, often they'll report you if you are just half a minute late. Glenna isn't like that."

"Glenna?" inquired Marjory.

"Glenna Brockman. She has this house."

"Oh, I didn't know whom you meant. Surely your friend isn't a landlady?"

"She is a student too, but she intends to take a select group of girls. I suppose many will be turned away,

for this house is unusual. It has tradition and background."

The two girls glanced dubiously about the kitchen, and Lois recognized that her little pep talk was not very convincing.

"See here," she said, driving straight to the point. "You tell me you're grateful because I pulled you out of the river. Then why not do me a favor in return?"

"Why, of course," declared Marcia instantly.

"Glenna is a good friend of mine, and she's trying to earn her way through school by taking roomers."

"What I've seen of the house doesn't look very modern," Marjory said, glancing about.

"It's not fixed up yet. And there is a marvelous old piano."

"Let's do it, Marj," Marcia urged. "You could practice here to your heart's content."

"Well, all right," the other girl agreed reluctantly. "But we can't pay more than five dollars a week."

When Glenna returned a moment later with dry clothing, she learned of the arrangement which Lois had made, and while it was her own thought that five dollars a week was too much rent to ask, she allowed the figure to stand. After Marjory and Marcia had changed their clothes, they asked to see their rooms.

"I'm afraid they're not ready to show," Glenna apologized. "But everything will be in order by Monday when you move in."

Before leaving the house, Marjory sat down at the old piano and ran her fingers over the keys.

"Oh, horrible!" she exclaimed. "How long since it has been tuned?"

"A good many years," admitted Glenna.

"I really could never play on a piano such as this!"

"I'll have it tuned," Glenna rashly promised.

After the two girls had left, Lois gathered together her discarded wet garments, declaring that she must hurry home.

"You were marvelous, Lois," Glenna said, giving the girl's hand a firm pressure. "While I stood on shore like a helpless ninny, you saved Marcia and her friend. And then you aided me by inducing them to come here as roomers."

"I'm not sure I aided you," Lois replied, scowling thoughtfully. "That girl Marjory is no bargain. She may make you trouble."

"Oh, I don't blame her for being dissatisfied with the house. It is an old wreck. And I have so little money to spend."

"When they come back Monday, be sure to collect the first month's rent in advance," Lois warned. "Well, so long. I'll bring these clothes back tomorrow."

Whistling to Pal, she went down the path, launched her canoe, and soon was lost to view.

During the following week, Lois and Pal were constant visitors at Ghost Gables and Glenna wondered

how she could have carried through without the younger girl to aid and encourage her. Each day there were classes to attend, long assignments to prepare. Coupled with the problem of adjusting herself to college life was the task of getting the old Reid house into presentable order.

Glenna spent hours at her desk adding up long columns of figures, trying to plan so that one dollar would do the work of two. Daily her funds dwindled, and she would not have had enough to eat, had not Lois, upon one pretext or another, brought ready-prepared foods from her own home. New trouble developed constantly—faucets needed washers, drains had a habit of plugging up—and in only one respect was the house better than its reputation. The reputed "ghost" had not put in his appearance.

Glenna became thinner, more serious, grim-lipped, but her determination hardened. She loved the old house. Nothing could induce her to give it up, she told herself, nothing save financial disaster. She did not mind practicing rigid economy, which meant giving up football games, social organizations, the extra little frills so much a part of college life. But she wondered if her sacrifices were not to be in vain.

"Well, at least I've made progress," she told Lois that following Saturday afternoon. "Everything is cleaned except one bedroom upstairs."

"The house looks grand," Lois praised. "Let's get

at that bedroom right away, because I'm going to the football game."

"Run along now. You've done too much here anyway."

"No, I haven't," Lois insisted. "I'll have plenty of time to get to the game."

Armed with broom, mop and dust rag, she climbed the circular staircase. She glanced into the bedroom which Marjory and Marcia were to share. Everything was in readiness for their arrival upon Monday. Glenna had bought bright new curtains and had made a dresser scarf of the same material. A gay rag rug covered a worn spot in the carpet.

"It really does look nice," Lois thought. "Glenna has talent for making a place seem homelike."

She went on, and tried the door of the room at the end of the hall. To her surprise it would not open.

"Oh, Glenna," she called, "did you lock this door?"

"Why, no," the older girl answered, coming up the steps. "I noticed it was stuck fast when I tried to open it the other day."

"The door isn't warped," Lois declared, inspecting it closely. "It's locked, Glenna! Isn't that exciting?"

"It's annoying."

"Don't you have a key?"

"Mr. Clements gave me several, but I doubt if any will fit."

Glenna went downstairs, returning in a minute with

a big ring of keys. The door could not be unlocked.

"Oh, I'm just dying to see inside," Lois declared, her eyes dancing with excitement. "Do you suppose Mr. Clements neglected to give you the key?"

"I suppose so, although it's odd that only this one room should be locked."

"Yes, it is," Lois agreed. "Glenna, it must have been closed off for a particular reason—a mysterious reason! Oh, we simply have to get inside! Can't you dash down to Mr. Clements' office right away and see if he has the key?"

"Yes, I'll go," said Glenna with an understanding smile. "I'm curious myself to learn what lies behind that door."

CHAPTER VI

THE LOCKED BEDROOM

WHILE Glenna was gone, Lois wandered aimlessly about the house, staring at the pictures, thumping out "Peter, Peter," on the keys of the newly tuned piano, glancing time and again at the clock.

From across the river she could hear the first militant strains of the college band. The stands were filling now for the football game. She surely would miss the first quarter unless Glenna came soon.

And then as the cheering section gave a rousing, "Ardmore! Ardmore! Ardmore!" which carried clearly across the stretch of water, Lois heard a step on the front porch. She rushed to open the door.

"Oh, Glenna, it took you simply ages!" she exclaimed. "Did you get the key?"

"No, I didn't. I had to wait because Mr. Clements was busy with a prospect."

"If you failed to get the key, how are we to open the door? Break it down?"

"The answer is, we're not to open it at all."

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Lois. "There's some mystery connected with that room, and I have to get in there!"

"I fear you must curb your curiosity. You see, Mr. Clements knew all about the locked door."

"What did he tell you?"

"Mrs. Reid failed to send the key to it. In fact, she expressly requested that the renter of the house refrain from using the locked bedroom."

"Well, that's a fine way to do, I must say! Who ever heard of renting a house and excluding one of the rooms?"

"Mr. Clements admits that he should have told me about the condition sooner. He agreed to cut the rent another five dollars a month."

"I should think so!"

"You see, that's how it stands. Since I have accepted the condition it would not be honorable for me to try to break into the room."

"This is maddening!" Lois muttered to herself. "Here I've run into a perfectly corking mystery, and then someone has to tack up a sign, 'Hands Off'!"

"Oh, I doubt if we'd have found anything very interesting in the room."

"Did Mr. Clements give you the slightest hint why it had been locked?"

"No. I don't think he knows himself."

"Well, it's mighty queer. I'll go crazy wondering what's in that room. Glenna, with a tall ladder I could—"

"No!"

"All right, you're the boss of Ghost Gables," Lois shrugged, "but I wish you'd think it over. I'm on my way to the football game now."

She vanished through the door and was seen no more that day.

However, the matter of the locked room had not been settled. As Glenna learned to her sorrow, Lois, despite her many grown-up traits, had one very youthful habit. When she did not get her way, she teased.

To all entreaties, Glenna turned a deaf ear, but it became increasingly difficult to resist the younger girl's plea.

"Just one tiny little peek, and then we'll lock the room again!" she would beg. "We have a ladder at home. I could get in easy!"

Glenna caught herself wondering why the owner of the house had requested that the room be kept locked. Yet, with Marjory and Marcia moving in, she had scant time to think of the mystery. Her spare moments were well occupied with the problem of keeping the household running smoothly on a minimum of money.

Marjory and Marcia had paid their room rent for one month in advance but their demands were many. They required a ventilator screen for their window and a case to hold books. Because there was no cafe nearer than eight blocks, they requested that breakfast be served, and this Glenna agreed to do for she was eager to earn a few extra dollars.

She had been well trained in cooking as well as housework. It was her ambition to take a domestic science course, and then upon graduation to seek employment with a large food concern. Her present work was "good experience" she told herself. Yet there were many times when she longed to forego experience for a few minutes of relaxation.

Glenna placed an advertisement of her rooms in the local paper and at Lois' suggestion, tacked a note on the bulletin board at Ardmore College. In passing through the corridor upon her way to a class she was encouraged to see a group of girls reading the notice. Her elation did not last long, for as she paused, she heard one of the students say:

"Oh, I know that place! It's a perfect old wreck and has been closed up for years. You couldn't hire me to stay there."

Several girls did come to inspect the house later, and two freshmen, Carol Marsh and Florence Simon, were duly installed in the South bedroom.

Glenna's day began at five o'clock. She arose, tended the furnace fire and turned on the water heater. As she prepared grapefruit for breakfast she usually studied French verbs, her textbook propped up against the window-sill. French was proving difficult for Glenna and she did not have enough time to devote to it.

Breakfast over, it was always a race to see if she could

get the dishes done in time for her eight o'clock geology class. Twice in a week she had been late because Marjory persisted in daudling over her coffee.

To Glenna's polite hint that time was pressing, the girl had retorted:

"Oh, bother! You worry too much about your old geology."

"But I'll be late, Marjory," Glenna had explained. "And you know how fussy Professor Fosdick is about tardiness."

"Oh, *him!* Do you know what I call that old fuss-budget? Fosdick the Fossil! The world is just a big rock pile to him."

Marjory had lingered on over her coffee, and finally, with a long-suffering sigh, arose and went to her own room. The following morning she took even more time than usual at the breakfast table.

Glenna was grateful to Lois who often dropped in to dust, sweep or help with the dishes. One Thursday afternoon, she arrived to find her friend in a worse predicament than usual.

"Just about everything went wrong today," sighed Glenna. "Mrs. Horn came over the first thing after breakfast. She delayed me so much that I didn't get the dishes done before class."

"Another complaint?"

"Yes, she disapproves of Marjory's boy friend. He

has a habit of blowing the car horn for her instead of ringing the doorbell. Mrs. Horn says I'm to put a stop to it at once."

"Mrs. Horn never misses a thing, does she? How is Marjory behaving herself?"

"Oh, I get along with her but she's touchy. You should hear her play the piano though. She's marvelous, Lois! But I mustn't stand here talking. I have a thousand things to do. We have a written French quiz tomorrow, and the English instructor told us to write a five hundred word theme. I haven't time for both—I just know I'll flunk French."

"What's your theme about?"

"Anything."

"That's a good subject," grinned Lois. "I'll dash it off for you. I'm not half bad at writing themes."

"You're good at everything," said Glenna with sincerity. "But it wouldn't be honest."

"This is an emergency," declared Lois. "Your theories are fine, Glenna, but they're impractical. You ought to see the way the girls help each other in the sorority houses."

"One might think you had been a college student yourself," smiled Glenna.

"Oh, I know a few of the ropes," Lois admitted with mock modesty. "Now you might get busy on the French while I devote myself to this literary masterpiece."

She sat down in a cosy corner of the library and for a half hour her pen scratched steadily. Then she read what she had written and nodded approvingly.

"This is a much better theme than I bother to write for myself," she told Glenna. "I shouldn't be surprised if you get an 'A.'"

"Well, I could use a few of them."

While Lois busied herself putting away the writing materials, Marjory Bennett came up the front walk. As usual she was accompanied by a young man, for the girl had made any number of campus conquests. However, she said goodbye to her friend at the door, and came in alone.

Nodding to Lois, she tossed her books into a chair, sat down at the piano, and swung into a jazz selection.

"It's supposed to be a study hour," Glenna suggested mildly.

"Oh, bother! These silly rules make me tired." Marjory went on playing the piano.

Glenna could not study her French, so she gave up and took herself to the kitchen. Lois listened to the music a few minutes and then followed.

"Marjory does play beautifully," she told Glenna.

"Yes, but she has very little consideration for anyone in the house."

"If I were you, I would clamp down on her," advised Lois. "Let her know right now that you are in charge.

If you don't, she'll soon think that she rules the roost!"

Glenna smiled but made no reply, and in a short while the music ceased. However, before Marjory could go to her room, the two freshmen, Carol and Florence, entered the house with an armload of books from the library. They were obviously disturbed, and Carol went to the kitchen door to call Glenna.

"Oh, Miss Brockman!"

"Yes," said Glenna, coming into the living room.

"We were talking with your neighbor a moment ago," said Carol.

"Mrs. Horn?" Glenna prepared herself for what was to come.

"Yes, she was telling us about this house. I don't believe we could stay here any longer, not under the circumstances."

"But why—?"

"It's because of the ghost," stammered Carol. "Mrs. Horn tells us the house is rumored to be haunted."

Glenna and Lois looked at each other a trifle grimly. They had known that sooner or later the ghost would arise to plague them, but they had not expected Mrs. Horn to start the tale.

"Have you seen any spectres flitting around?" Glenna inquired, trying to make her voice sound casual and amused.

"And that's not all," added Florence, ignoring the

question. "We've been told there are any number of queer things connected with this house."

"Queer things?" asked Glenna mildly.

"Yes, that room at the end of the hall for instance. Why is it always kept locked?"

CHAPTER VII

A CALL FROM THE DEAN

FLORENCE SIMON'S question startled Glenna because it was so unexpected. Now with a quick flash of intuition, she knew that during her absence from Ghost Gables the girls had been exploring the house. Undoubtedly, this was not the first time that Mrs. Horn had tried to arouse their curiosity and suspicions.

"There is no particular mystery about the room," she answered. "It is kept locked because the owner of the house made the request."

"But why?" asked Carol.

"I'm sure I can't tell you."

"I suspect someone was murdered in the room," declared Florence.

"Why, that is ridiculous!" exclaimed Glenna, indignantly. "Mrs. Horn told you such a story?"

"Well, no, she didn't," Florence admitted. "She merely mentioned the ghost."

"I really am surprised," said Glenna. "I had no idea college girls believed in goblins and ghosts."

"We don't really," said Carol, flushing.

"Then I'd forget the story. I can assure you no one

has been murdered in this house, and I believe I can safely guarantee that no wicked ghost will trouble you."

"It's all in Mrs. Horn's mind anyway," spoke Lois. "She would dearly love to see you girls leave because she thinks you make entirely too much noise!"

"Why, the very idea!" exclaimed Florence. "Too much noise! Wait until we see her again!"

Their minds diverted, the two girls went to their room, chattering indignantly about Mrs. Horn's "colossal nerve." Marjory Bennett, who had been an interested spectator to the little scene, smiled as she followed them upstairs.

"Nothing goes right today," Glenna sighed when she was alone with Lois. "I can't understand why Mrs. Horn has to be so hateful. I've always been polite to her."

"I don't understand it either," Lois replied. "But it's clear she would like to see you out of this house."

"She'll have her way soon enough. Things can't go on like this much longer."

"No, you're working yourself to death," agreed Lois. "You need a boy to tend the furnace, and if you intend to keep on serving meals, you should have someone in the kitchen."

"I can't afford it."

Lois said nothing. She went to the cellarway for the broom and dust mop.

"It isn't right for you to spend all your spare time here doing tasks which you hate," Glenna protested. "Here, let me have that broom!"

Lois held fast to the handle and tugged. "No, you keep digging at those French verbs."

"Don't you ever need to do any studying of your own?" Glenna inquired, settling herself with the textbook.

"Oh, now and then. But High School subjects are easy. Besides, I have a lot of extra credits. I could flunk three subjects this term and still graduate."

"Comforting thought."

For an hour Glenna studied diligently while Lois cleaned the downstairs rooms. By the time she had finished the task it was nearing the dinner hour.

"I must be getting back to the boat dock," she declared, glancing out the window. "It looks to me as if it might storm any minute."

Dark, menacing clouds were rolling up from the western horizon. A stir of wind rustled the tree leaves, showering sidewalk and yard with the brightly-hued foliage.

"Winter will soon be here," sighed Glenna. "How I hate it."

"When the river freezes over you'll like the ice skating," said Lois. "And we ski on Braddock's hill."

She put away her dusting equipment and whistled for Pal to come up out of the cellar.

"My, it's getting cold outside," Glenna observed, opening the door. "Didn't you wear your heavy coat?"

"No, but I'm tough. I'll not need it."

As Lois stepped out on the porch, a few drops of rain splattered down, and then the very heavens seemed to open wide. A deluge of rain descended.

"I'll have to borrow an umbrella, Glenna."

"Come back in the house," the older girl said, taking Lois by the elbow. "You can't go out in this. Wait until it passes over."

A half hour elapsed, but there was no indication that the storm would let up. Now and then hard pellets of hail struck against the window panes.

"Stay for dinner," Glenna urged as Lois again spoke of braving the rain. "For that matter, why not remain all night? You never have spent an evening at Ghost Gables."

"Won't you need to study?"

"Yes, but you'll not bother me. I could recite my French verbs to you."

"All right," agreed Lois. "I'll run over to Mrs. Horn's house, and telephone Mother."

She donned Glenna's raincoat and darted out into the storm, returning in a short while to report that her mother had said she might remain at Ghost Gables.

"Was Mrs. Horn provoked because you used her telephone?" inquired Glenna.

"Oh, she always seems friendly enough around me.

But I spoke to her about that ghost story she's been circulating!"

"Lois, you didn't!"

"Why not? She hasn't any business to be trying to make trouble for you."

"What did she say, Lois?"

"Oh, she evaded the issue, and pretended she didn't know anything about it."

"I'm afraid you'll make her dislike me even more than she does," declared Glenna, looking worried. "I think it's best just to pay no attention to her."

The girls prepared their evening meal, a more frugal repast than Lois would have had at home. She gave Pal the scraps and locked him in the cellar again.

After the dishes had been stacked away, and the dining room table set for breakfast, Lois and Glenna went upstairs. For a time they were disturbed by laughter and singing from Marjory's room where the other girls had gathered, but soon the house settled down.

Glenna recited French to Lois who had studied the subject in high school. By ten o'clock they both felt that progress had been made.

"You should pass your exam tomorrow with flying colors," Lois said, yawning. "Let's get to bed now."

However, before Glenna could turn out the light, Marjory Bennett tapped on the door and asked if she might come in.

"Miss Brockman," she said, "I have a request to make. I notice that you have a vacant bedroom downstairs. Do you mind if Marcia and I move down there?"

Glenna did mind a great deal, for she knew how much work would be required to prepare the room for occupancy.

"Why do you wish to change?" she asked after a moment. "Aren't you comfortable where you are?"

"Oh, Marcia and I thought we'd like the downstairs room better. With so many girls on one floor it's noisy."

Lois started to voice her own observation upon the subject of noise, but subsided into silence as Glenna gave her a warning glance.

"I don't see how you possibly could object," Marjory went on sweetly.

"The downstairs room isn't as well furnished as the one you have."

"Oh, we'll move anything we need. May we have the room?"

"Why, I suppose so," Glenna consented.

"Thank you," Marjory cried, and ran back to inform her roommate of the decision.

Glenna frowned thoughtfully as she reached up to turn out the light.

"I wonder what was back of that request?" she mused. "I can't believe Marjory has been disturbed by too much noise."

"She's the one who creates it," Lois said. "If I were you, I'd tighten the screws a bit, Glenna. You're too easy on that spoiled infant."

Glenna darkened the room, and pushed up the window. It was still raining, but not as hard as earlier in the evening.

Lois, claiming more than her share of the big four-poster bed, curled up kitten-fashion and soon was fast asleep. However, the mattress did not seem as soft as the one on her bed at home, and presently she was awake again, aware of a pain in her shoulder muscles. She rolled over but could not adjust herself comfortably.

All was quiet in the great house. Outside the wind moaned softly in the trees, but there was no sound of rain drumming against the roof.

Then as Lois was growing drowsy, she was aroused again by the barking of a dog.

"I do believe that was Pal!" she thought, sitting up in bed. "Now what's wrong with him?"

Lois waited a moment, and hearing the dog bark once more, decided to investigate. She moved noiselessly from bed without disturbing Glenna, and slipping into a robe which lay on the chair, stole to the head of the stairway. Pal's muffled barking could be heard quite plainly.

Hurrying down the steps, Lois opened the door leading into the basement.

"Pal!" she called softly.

The dog ceased barking and came to her.

"What's the matter, old boy? Scared by a rat?"

Lois peered down into the cellar, and observing nothing wrong, closed the door upon the collie once more. She waited a moment, and when he seemed resigned to his quarters, tiptoed away.

She paused by the living room to glance out at the sky. A full moon, shadowed by wisps of clouds moving swiftly across its face, was visible through the grove of maples.

Then suddenly Lois stiffened as she saw another object among the trees—a ghostly figure which appeared in her line of vision momentarily, and then disappeared.

"Am I dreaming or was that a—ghost?" Lois thought.

After watching the grove for several minutes, she laughed shakily.

"Too many weiners for supper!" she muttered. "I certainly won't mention this to Glenna."

In the morning the incident seemed very trivial to Lois, but it did occur to her to wonder why Pal had barked, for it was not his habit to create a disturbance during the night. She was glad that no one except herself had been awakened.

Lois helped serve breakfast and then gathered up her things, ready to start for school. She stopped in the doorway for a moment.

"If you're going to your eight o'clock, Glenna, I'll walk along part way with you."

As they went out of the house together, the postman came up the walk with several letters. Glenna took them from him and glanced through the stack. Three letters were for Marjory, one for Carol, and the very last one for herself.

"Well, this is a surprise," she remarked. "I very seldom get anything. It's from the University too."

She tore open the envelope and a deep frown settled between her eyebrows as she read the typewritten communication.

"Why, it's a notice from the Dean of Women," she said. "I'm supposed to call at her office sometime today."

"Oh, Oh!"

"Do you imagine it's anything serious, Lois?"

"It's always serious when you get a call from the Dean."

"But I have no idea why she wishes to see me."

"I suppose you talked with her before you leased Ghost Gables?" Lois inquired after a moment.

"Why, no," confessed Glenna. "Should I have asked permission?"

"Should you?" echoed Lois with a groan. "Oh, Glenna! Well, I wish you luck with the Dean, because you'll certainly need it!"

CHAPTER VIII

LOIS TRIES STRATEGY

AT FOUR o'clock that afternoon when Glenna, notebook tucked under her arm, came wearily home from classes, she found Lois and Pal waiting on the front steps of Ghost Gables.

"Was it pretty awful?" the younger girl inquired. "The French quiz or the Dean?"

"Oh, the Dean. I know you got through the exam."

"I'm not so sure," said Glenna in a discouraged voice. "I was pretty worried and I couldn't keep my mind on the questions. Still, I did better than I expected. Not that it matters now."

"The Dean certainly took the starch out of you," declared Lois sympathetically. "What did she have to say?"

"Oh, it was just as you guessed. She had heard about me renting this house."

"She disapproved, of course."

"Well, she was nice about it. She said she appreciated my desire to earn my way through college, but that I was entirely too young to have charge of other girls."

"Deans have silly ideas," observed Lois. "I suppose

she thought that you couldn't maintain discipline?"

"Yes. Well, the outcome of the interview was that she'll let me go on here another week. By that time I must give up the place, or have some elderly, responsible woman in charge who will serve as chaperon and enforce the rules."

"What will you do, Glenna?"

"I don't know. I've been trying to think, but my head throbs. No matter what I attempt, I usually end in failure."

"This *is* a piece of evil luck," Lois acknowledged. "The worst you've had yet."

"I may try to find a housekeeper, but I can't afford to pay a very high salary."

"It won't be easy to get the right woman," Lois said. "A person whom the Dean would consider suitable, wouldn't be likely to take the job without a fat salary attached."

"Then I'm through."

"We'll find someone," Lois said. "I'll talk with Mother tonight. She may be able to think of the right person."

By this time both Mr. and Mrs. McDonald had become interested in Glenna's venture, for each day they were treated to a lengthy report of the happenings at Ghost Gables. However, when Lois broached the girl's latest problem, they were without an idea.

"I'm sure I don't know of any woman in Ardmore

who would take the position at low pay," Mrs. McDonald declared. "I'll keep thinking about it."

Basketball practice engrossed Lois' time so that she did not return to Ghost Gables for three days. But when she saw Glenna again, she realized at once that matters had not improved.

"You've found no one for the housekeeping job?"

"No, I've interviewed dozens of persons. I found one woman who agreed to take the position, but the Dean didn't approve of her. And that's not the worst. We've had another ghost scare."

"What happened?"

"Oh, Florence and Carol claim they saw a white figure walking in the garden. Florence told me again they couldn't live in a haunted house. I was so upset I lost patience. I told her she could leave if she wished."

"I suppose she will?"

"No, she calmed down right away. But she and Carol both insist they actually saw the ghost. If the Dean hears such talk it will finish me, even if I am not finished now."

"When did this ghost put in his appearance?" Glenna asked thoughtfully.

"Florence claimed they saw it last night around midnight."

"Glenna, I believe I should give Pal back to you. He'd guard the place."

"I don't need a guard. Ghost talk is so childish."

"Maybe not."

Glenna regarded her friend in blank amazement. "Why, Lois!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, I don't believe in ghosts," Lois said impatiently, "but I do think someone might be playing a joke on you. I hadn't intended to tell you this, Glenna, but I saw something queer myself the night of the storm."

She quickly related her observations at the window.

"Don't you think you were mistaken, Lois?"

"Well, I might have been, but if Florence and Carol saw the same white figure, it begins to look suspicious!"

"Who would wish to play a joke on me?" Glenna demanded. "I'm practically unknown here in Ardmore."

"I can't figure it," said Lois. "Why don't you keep watch for that so-called ghost and track him down?"

"You believe it is some person?"

"Maybe a smart-alecky college man has heard about the story connected with this house, and is trying to have some fun at your expense. I'll tell you what, Glenna! If you're willing, I'll stay here for a night or two and keep watch. I'd dearly love to catch a ghost!"

"I am sure you would," laughed Glenna, her spirits lifting. "I'll be delighted to have you stay, of course."

Lois obtained permission from her parents and spent that very night at Ghost Gables. After the other girls had retired, she made up her bed on the living room davenport.

"Now, Mr. Ghost, I hope you decide to do a little parading tonight," she remarked jokingly. "I'll be waiting for you."

Lois, however, discovered that the dark quiet old house had a will of its own. Its restful solitude lured her into a deep sleep and to her great disgust she did not awaken until the Grandfather clock struck six.

"I'll catch that ghost yet," Lois announced firmly.

The next night she managed to keep awake until after two o'clock, but if any ghosts were abroad she did not observe them.

Upon the third night she had scant hope of anything developing, and so was taken by surprise. Shortly after 12 o'clock she was startled to hear a rattling sound almost at her ear.

Lois tossed off her blankets and moved swiftly to the living room window. She was certain someone had thrown a handful of gravel against the pane.

Taking care to remain well hidden behind the curtain, Lois gazed out into the yard. She saw a strange sight, one which set her heart to beating at a quickened pace.

A tall, ghostly figure, which seemed to have no head or arms, flitted among the trees. As she watched, it slowly retreated deeper into the grove.

"That ghost wanted to be seen!" Lois muttered. "Otherwise, why would gravel have been thrown against the window?"

She started for the door, and then changed her mind. Gliding to the stairway, she called softly: "Glenna! Glenna!" and hearing the bed springs squeak, knew that her friend had awakened.

Without losing another instant, Lois then flung open the door, and sprinted toward the white figure which now was at the far end of the garden. The ghost stood perfectly still for a moment, and then fled.

Lois saw the figure scramble through the high hedge. But when she reached the site, no one was in sight.

"A very courageous ghost, I must say," the girl told herself.

As she looked carefully about, she noticed a tiny piece of cloth which had caught on a thorny branch of the property barrier.

"That ghost was real all right," she thought with grim satisfaction.

While Lois was examining the piece of cloth, Glenna, garbed in slippers and housecoat, came running through the frosty grass.

"Why did you call, Lois?" she cried. "Did you see anything?"

"The ghost managed to get away, but here is a piece of his costume!"

"Then someone is prowling about the grounds!"

"Rather, and the ghost is anxious to be seen too! I'm certain gravel was thrown against the window to attract attention."

After making a careful tour of the grounds and assuring themselves that no one lurked in the vicinity, the girls returned to the house. They snapped on a light and inspected the piece of cloth. To their surprise is was not white but pale pink.

Lois stared at the material for a long while.

"Well, I never would have believed it," she said at length.

"You'd never have believed what, Lois?"

"That Mrs. Horn would stoop to such a juvenile trick!"

"You think Mrs. Horn was the ghost?"

"Yes, I do. When I went to her house the other day to telephone, I saw a pink cape hanging in the kitchen. It was an exact match for this piece of cloth!"

"Even so, that proves nothing."

"It's proof enough for me, Glenna. Didn't Mrs. Horn tell the girls about the ghost in the first place? Oh, it's obvious she's trying to create trouble."

"But why should she act so petty? Lois, I'm sure you must be mistaken."

"I don't think so, but I can't understand what is in her mind. She has some reason for not wishing you to have charge of this house, Glenna."

"I might ask her point-blank."

"No, don't do that," advised Lois. "I may be able to think up something better. Let me mull over it for awhile."

Making certain that the doors were fastened, the girls switched out the lights and went to bed. There was no further disturbance, and when Glenna awoke, she wondered for a moment if she had imagined the events of the night. However, Lois sat up in bed, pushed her rumpled hair from her eyes, and said:

"It came to me in a flash, Glenna! I know how we can manage Mrs. Horn!"

"You must have dreamed out your idea," laughed Glenna. "I declare, you've not been awake two minutes."

"My sub-conscious mind works while I sleep," Lois grinned. "We're studying psychology this year, and I like to test out the theories. Mrs. Horn will make an interesting case."

"Well, what is this remarkable idea?"

"It's all very simple. You need a woman to take charge of the house, a combination cook, housekeeper and chaperon. Now Mrs. Horn is so anxious to learn what goes on here that she's fairly eaten up with curiosity. Why not solve your own problem and hers, too, by giving her the job?"

"I must say that *is* a brilliant idea!"

"It's rather clever, I'll admit," retorted Lois, ignoring the sarcasm in Glenna's voice. "Mrs. Horn is a peculiar character. She'll do anything for a person she likes."

"And she's displayed such an affection for me."

"It will be our problem to convert her to your cause."

"Well, your ideas are changeable to say the least! Last night you thought Mrs. Horn was playing ghost—"

"I still think so," broke in Lois, "but if I know anything about Mrs. Horn, she'll do a right-about-face and become your friend. All you need to do is appeal to her sympathies and vanity. Go over to her house this morning and tell her all your troubles. Tell her the Dean is about to toss you out on your ear, and that someone is stirring up the girls with ghost tales. Then ask her advice and lead up to how much she'll take to run the whole show!"

"According to your theory, she will break down, accept the position for a mere pittance, and everything will be honey and roses forever after!"

"Something like that," grinned Lois. "Your offer will flatter her."

"Here's a factor you may not have considered. If Mrs. Horn happened to be responsible for our ghost scare last night, she'd be in an excellent position to create more trouble if I installed her as housekeeper."

"Yes," acknowledged Lois, "but if you could get Mrs. Horn to take the job, I'm pretty sure things would run smoothly. You see, she's very proud of her reputation as a wonderful manager."

"And the Dean would approve of Mrs. Horn?"

"Oh, yes, I could guarantee it."

"The idea sounds perfectly crazy to me, but I admit I'm desperate."

"All psychology is based upon crazy sounding theories," declared Lois with a learned air. "But our instructor says most of 'em work!"

"We'll test out your idea," Glenna laughed. "Still, I'd rather be drawn through the eye of a needle than to ask Mrs. Horn for a favor."

"Now don't take that attitude. I wish you'd run over and see her before I leave. I'm anxious to hear what she says."

After breakfast, Lois insisted upon washing the dishes while she sent the reluctant Glenna to interview Mrs. Horn. The girl was absent perhaps twenty-five minutes.

"Any luck?" Lois demanded, meeting her at the door.

"It was almost funny," Glenna answered, her eyes twinkling. "I told her my troubles just as you suggested, and when I spoke of the ghost Mrs. Horn acted so self-conscious and almost ashamed."

"There, didn't I tell you!"

"Her attitude gave me the courage to go on. She became oh, so sympathetic—and it was genuine, too. Would you believe it, Lois, she actually apologized!"

"For being the ghost?"

"No, because she hadn't been more friendly. She explained that she hadn't realized how much having this house meant to me."

"And she agreed to take the job?"

"She was almost eager for it. All she asked was five dollars a week. She said she had been afraid at first that I would damage the fine furniture, and that she had known Mrs. Reid so well!"

"And right there is the key to the whole situation!" cried Lois triumphantly. "Mrs. Horn is intensely loyal to the former owner of this house, and she's trying to hide something! But just you wait! We'll learn that secret yet!"

CHAPTER IX

A NIGHT ON THE RIVER

A FLURRY of soft snow whipped against Glenna's cheek as she left the geology laboratory and walked across the deserted campus toward the river. It was after four o'clock, but she felt no inclination to hurry. With Mrs. Horn installed at Ghost Gables, there would be very little work to do when she reached home. She could study her lessons, eat her dinner, and then enjoy several hours of recreation before ten o'clock. Why, she might even accept Lois' invitation to go skating.

Glenna's gaze wandered toward the gleaming red tile roof of the Women's Gymnasium. She was learning to swim now, and felt proud because she had negotiated the length of the crystal blue pool for the first time that day. Lois was urging her to try for the hockey team and there really was no reason why she shouldn't. She had time to spare.

A month earlier Glenna would not have believed that she could have so much freedom and leisure. Mrs. Horn had "swung into harness" with characteristic energy. In a week's time she had taken over all the duties of the household, the marketing, the cooking,

the cleaning, and still found ample time to keep an alert eye upon the girls. Rules were strictly enforced. By the end of the second week, she was serving dinner as well as breakfast, charging more than Glenna would have dared ask. The Dean was satisfied, Glenna was satisfied, and Mrs. Horn appeared to be enjoying herself immensely.

"Lois was right in her so-called psychological theories," the girl thought, smiling. "And about the ghost, too!"

Since Mrs. Horn had taken charge of the house, there had been no nightly disturbances. Glenna gradually was forced to accept Lois' contention, that the woman herself had been responsible for the visit of the "ghost." Yet she remained puzzled for now that she knew her well, Mrs. Horn did not seem like a spiteful person. Glenna was reflecting upon the matter, walking with head bent low, when she heard her name called.

Turning, she saw Lois waving to her from the corner.

"Hello, Glenna," the younger girl laughed, as she hurried up, gasping for breath. "I've chased you for two blocks!"

"Sorry I didn't hear you call. I was thinking so hard."

"No more trouble with the Dean?" Lois inquired anxiously.

"Everything is running smoothly. In fact, I'm worried because I have nothing to worry about."

"You are in a sad state," chuckled Lois. "Have you been working yourself into Mrs. Horn's good graces?"

"Well, she seems to like me better. This morning when I started away without my galoshes, she came running after me just like a mother."

"A favorable sign," Lois commented. "Any day she should break down and talk."

"She does that now," said Glenna ruefully. "She chatters constantly."

"Oh, you know what I mean. About the mystery."

"I doubt if she has anything to tell."

"You can't make me believe she doesn't know all about Mrs. Reid and why Ghost Gables was closed up," Lois declared. "Has she said anything about the locked room?"

"No, the other day I asked her why she thought Mrs. Reid wished it kept closed, and she answered, 'It's none of my business, and I don't intend to pry.' "

"She pries all right when she happens to be interested," Lois said with a sniff. "The reason she isn't curious is because she already *knows.*"

"I did learn something which may interest you," Glenna went on. "Mrs. Horn told me that it was her belief Mrs. Reid had become estranged from her brother, a former professor here at Ardmore. She thought the disagreement centered about Mrs. Reid's son."

"The boy, Terry, whose picture hangs in the library,"

Lois said thoughtfully. "Well, that all fits in. Glenna, do you suppose the locked bedroom could have been his?"

"Perhaps."

"I wish we knew. Somehow I feel that if we could get inside that room, the mystery would be solved."

"I'll keep trying to extract bits of information from Mrs. Horn," Glenna promised. "However, I fear I won't learn much."

"The easiest way would be just to force open that door," Lois muttered, a remark which her friend ignored.

They walked along in silence until they came to the bridge where they paused for a few minutes to watch a group of ice skaters.

"This weather may not last very long," Lois said. "Are you coming out with us tonight?"

"Yes, I have a notion to try it, but I'm a miserable skater."

"I'll drop around for you after dinner," Lois promised. "Say about seven o'clock."

At the dinner table that evening, Glenna spoke so enthusiastically about the anticipated outing that Marjory Bennett suggested it might be a good idea if they all tried the ice skating. There was a flurry of excitement as the girls assembled warm costumes.

Lois escorted her little party to a secluded stretch of ice sheltered from the biting wind by high banks. Al-

ready there were many persons skating, and a cheerful fire blazed on the shore.

"I'll get you started, Glenna," said Lois briskly.

An expert skater, she propelled the girl up and down the river and then swinging her toward a group of college boys, announced that she was "on her own."

"Now don't be bashful, Glenna," she instructed. "If any of the fellows ask you to skate, just say 'yes' and grab a mitten quick!"

"But I'm such a miserable skater—"

"Oh, that doesn't make any difference," Lois said impatiently. "They like to help beginners, especially if they happen to be pretty. It makes 'em feel very manly. Just watch Marjory—she's not losing any time."

Glenna turned her head to see the dark-haired girl flash past, between two college men. When she looked around again, Lois had deserted her. She took a stroke forward and tried to head toward the bonfire. Her feet would not obey her wishes. She struck a wide crack in the ice and lost her balance. Her arms began to wave wildly in the air—she was going to fall. And then as she uttered a little shriek of dismay, she felt herself caught firmly by the shoulders. Her feet steadied and she glanced gratefully up into the dark, friendly face of a young man in a white stocking cap, who was supporting her with a strong grasp.

"Oh, thanks," she gasped.

"Just learning to skate?" he asked with a smile. "Here, let me help you."

Glenna fully had intended to say "no" if any young man asked her to skate, but now her acceptance was taken for granted. As they swung down the river together, her feet seemed to take wings, and she glided over the smooth ice with no fear of falling.

"Oh, you skate marvelously!" she exclaimed.

"I was raised near a river," he answered. "My name is Howard Gregg."

Glenna told him her own, and soon they were well acquainted, chatting about different courses and professors they liked. When she grew tired he took her back to the fire where they sat on a huge log, toasting their toes and watching the others.

Lois, in end position, was playing crack-the-whip, and as the long line of skaters whipped around, she went sprawling across the ice. She scrambled up, laughing and unhurt, ready for more. Presently, as the hour grew late, she came to tell Glenna that she must go home.

"I'll be leaving in a few minutes too," said Glenna. She added in a whisper. "Howard Gregg is taking me!"

Lois gave the young man an appraising glance and grinned.

"Do you have a way to get home?" Glenna asked anxiously.

"Three of 'em. But I think I'll choose Jack."

It was a quarter to ten when Glenna reached Ghost Gables and bade her new acquaintance good-bye. She entered the house, trying not to look self-conscious as she observed Marcia, Carol and Florence warming themselves over the hot-air registers.

"He's very good looking, Glenna," said Marcia with a giggle. "A freshman?"

"No, a Junior."

"Oh, oh, you do know how to pick them," teased Carol. "Did he ask you for another date?"

"I'm not saying," laughed Glenna, rather pleased by their interest. And to change the subject: "If everyone is in I'll lock the door."

"Marjory is still out," said Marcia.

Glenna glanced at the clock.

"I told her not to be late," Marcia declared. "But she was having a pretty good time."

Carol and Florence went up to bed after warming their fingers, while Marcia remained in the living room. The hands of the clock pointed to three minutes of ten.

"I don't know what to do if she doesn't get here," Glenna said uneasily. "Mrs. Horn gave strict orders the door was to be locked at the stroke of ten."

"A lock-out is so serious," Marcia protested. "Marjory would be called to the Dean's office, and her privileges curtailed. She'll probably only be a minute or two late."

"Mrs. Horn warned Marjory last week. Still, I do hate to get her into trouble."

The clock struck the hour of ten. Glenna opened the door, and glanced up the street but there was no sign of Marjory.

"Oh, be a good scout," Marcia pleaded. "Think how you would feel—"

"That's the trouble," sighed Glenna, "I am altogether too sympathetic."

While she was debating what to do, the matter was taken from her hands. Mrs. Horn, hair done up in curl papers, appeared at the head of the stairway.

"Is that you, Glenna?" she called.

"Yes, I am just coming upstairs."

"Are all the girls in?"

"Everyone except Marjory," Glenna answered reluctantly.

Mrs. Horn came down the stairway, her flannel robe trailing on the carpet. She glanced at the clock.

"Five minutes after ten!" she exclaimed. "And you haven't locked the door?"

"I was just starting to do it."

"Oh, wait, Mrs. Horn," pleaded Marcia as the woman moved toward the door. "She'll surely be along any minute now."

Mrs. Horn did not answer. Deaf to Marcia's pleadings, she turned the key in the lock, and, with a smile of satisfaction, went back upstairs.

CHAPTER X

LOCK-OUT

THE clock struck ten-thirty and still Marjory did not return. In her own room, Glenna brushed her hair and listened anxiously for the girl's step on the porch. Had something happened? Perhaps Marjory had fallen through the ice or had injured herself.

And then relief swept over her as the doorbell tingled. Before she could go downstairs, Mrs. Horn answered. Marjory's angry voice could be heard arguing, and then the girl went into her room on the first floor and slammed the door.

In the morning, Marjory was sullen and refused to explain why she had been late, except to say: "I stayed out because I wished. I'm nineteen now, old enough to know when it's time to go to bed."

To her roommate, Marcia, she confided that she intended to find another place to stay, but her attitude underwent a noticeable change after she had talked with the Dean of Women. The summons came in less than a week, and Marjory emerged from the office, crestfallen and subdued. She could have no "dates" until after New Year's, and if she changed rooming houses it must be to the dormitory.

"It's not fair, just because I was half an hour late!" Marjory told Marcia indignantly. "If it weren't for my course in music, I would quit college!"

She was cool toward Glenna and did not try to hide her dislike for Mrs. Horn. However, the discipline apparently was what she had needed, for she broke no more rules. As the months wore on, the household revolved smoothly, and Glenna in totaling up her accounts, was elated that her enterprise showed a nice little profit. She offered to raise Mrs. Horn's salary.

"No, child," refused the housekeeper, "I didn't take this job because of the money."

"Then why did you accept it?"

"Well—" Mrs. Horn hesitated, and finished: "Oh, just because I couldn't bear to see this house run in such harum-scarum fashion. If you have any extra money use it for your own enjoyment. Buy a concert ticket."

In these days Glenna did not see as much of Lois as she would have liked. The younger girl had her own interests, and when brought to task for not calling more frequently, offered as an excuse that Ghost Gables depressed her.

"Why, I thought you liked the house," Glenna said in astonishment.

"Oh, I do, but it's exasperating not to be able to get anywhere with the mystery. Whenever I go upstairs I see that locked door staring me in the face; whenever

I go to the library, there's Terry to challenge me, and Mrs. Horn reigns supreme in the kitchen, the greatest enigma of all!"

"We never learned very much from her, did we?"

"No, and I'm certain she could explain things if only she would. Occasionally she drops out a little hint—just enough to throw one into a frenzy of frustrated excitement."

Smiling at Lois' use of words, Glenna moved to the window and gazed out across the river. The buds of the trees were beginning to swell as the warm sun beat down upon a winter-weary earth, and in the garden the forsythia bush was a mass of yellow. Spring was in the air.

"Weather such as this makes me lazy," she declared with a yawn.

"It won't be long until Dad will be opening up the canoe dock," Lois said. "I suppose that friend of yours, Howard Gregg, will be a steady customer of ours this season. I'll have to ask Dad to give him a special rate."

"Not upon my account," laughed Glenna, blushing.

"How does this lush weather affect Marjory?" Lois asked after a moment. "Has she been breaking any more rules?"

"No, I guess she's been too busy with exams. And then she is trying for the Walker prize, you know."

"Isn't that a cash award given for the best original musical composition?" inquired Lois.

"Yes, it's considered a great honor to win it. In addition to a five hundred dollar cash prize, the winner receives a scholarship abroad. I wish I were musical."

"Do you think Marjory has a chance to win it?"

"I don't know. She plays the piano beautifully, but when she tries to compose pieces of her own, I don't care much for them. Perhaps it's because my ear isn't educated."

"I'd go crazy hearing her thump the piano at all hours."

"At times it is annoying," Glenna admitted, "but in general she's so well-behaved I'd hate to complain about such a small matter. Still, I've had a queer feeling about Marjory lately."

"What do you mean?" Lois asked quickly.

"Well, I can't explain it. She's acted almost as if she were enjoying some secret. And her roommate acts rather guilty too."

"Marj probably is up to something," Lois declared. "That girl is a sly one."

"At any rate, she's never out after ten o'clock, so I've no cause for annoyance."

A few evenings later, Lois spent the night with Glenna, and in helping Mrs. Horn with the dishes, the housekeeper waxed more friendly than usual. Making the most of her opportunity, the girl turned the conversation toward Mrs. Reid.

"I've told you all I know," declared the housekeeper

impatiently. "You keep at a body like a woodpecker!"

"Why, I've not even learned the name of Mrs. Reid's brother," Lois said in an offended tone.

"It was Kohler. Professor Jefferson Kohler. He taught biology in the college and was highly respected. However, he moved away right after the house was closed up. Now that's all I know, so don't keep pestering me."

Lois tucked the information away in a corner of her mind, and when she had finished the dishes, ran upstairs to join Glenna who was studying in bed.

"Well, I learned something from Mrs. Sphinx Horn!" she announced gaily. "She broke down and told me the name of Mrs. Reid's brother. Professor Jefferson Kohler."

"That name sounds familiar," declared Glenna. "Where have I heard it?"

"I'm sure he doesn't teach at Ardmore now."

"No, I saw the name somewhere. It seems to me it was in the college catalogue."

"Then let's take a look at it!"

"The catalogue is in my desk in geology lab., but I'll see if I can find the name tomorrow."

"I can't understand why Mrs. Horn is so funny about disclosing things," Lois scowled. "A person hasn't a chance to solve a mystery when those who hold the clues refuse to talk."

"I rather believe you overestimate Mrs. Horn's

knowledge. You know, several times I've caught her staring at that locked door as if she were wondering about it, too."

"Really?" demanded Lois eagerly. "I wish she would get so curious she'd break down the door and invite us to look inside!"

Shortly after ten o'clock lights went out in the house. Glenna went downstairs and rapped on the door of the bedroom shared by Marcia and Marjory.

"Everyone in?" she inquired.

"Yes," was Marcia's muffled answer.

Glenna locked the front and back doors and returned to her own room. Lois already was in bed, but for some reason the older girl did not feel sleepy. She brushed her hair, and puttered about straightening toilet articles on her dresser.

"Aren't you ever coming to bed?" Lois grumbled.

"In a minute."

Glenna raised the window and stood gazing out across the garden. The moon cast a soft illumination over the grounds and painted silver highlights upon the placid waters of the Big Bear river. A beautiful spring evening, thought Glenna. She was aware of a warm, possessive feeling, as if like the house, the night belonged to her. She had found her place at Ardmore, and was happy.

Glenna was turning away from the window when from the direction of the river a white object drew her

attention. Emerging from the trees, the figure hesitated, and it was plainly visible against the dark background of the maples.

"Lois!"

"What is it?" The younger girl stirred impatiently.

"Come here—quickly."

Lois bounded from bed and joined her friend at the window.

"Over there," said Glenna, pointing. "What do you make of it?"

As she spoke, the white form glided across the yard, and vanished beyond the corner of the house.

"The ghost!" cried Lois. "Mrs. Horn must be up to her old tricks!"

"I wonder," said Glenna grimly. "I shall find out too."

Pulling on her robe as she hurried into the hall, the girl ran down the stairs and rapped on Mrs. Horn's door. There was no response until she had repeated the knock. Then the housekeeper asked drowsily:

"Who is it, please?"

Glenna had expected no reply. Caught off guard she stammered:

"I—I'm sorry to disturb you. It's Glenna."

Before she could retreat Mrs. Horn opened the door.

"What is it?" she inquired. "Is anything wrong?"

"No," Glenna murmured in embarrassment. "You didn't call me, did you?"

"You must have dreamed it, Glenna. I was sound asleep when you rapped on my door."

Apologizing again, the girl managed to escape. She went to the living room window and looked out, but there was no sign of the white form which had so startled her. Lois was waiting at the head of the stairs.

"Was Mrs. Horn in her room?" she whispered.

"Yes, and that explodes your theory."

"It does look as if she couldn't have been the ghost," Lois admitted. "But I'd have sworn she was! Why, everything worked out just as I thought it would, and that pink material matched her cape. I compared it one day to make sure."

"Seemingly you were mistaken. And so was I. It makes me feel ashamed to think how I've misjudged her."

"Let's go outside and search for that ghost."

"There's no one around now," said Glenna. "Besides, it's time we were in bed. I refuse to take this ghost business too seriously. Someone is merely trying to play a joke on us."

"Let's see, the ghost vanished around the East side of the house, didn't he?"

"Yes," agreed Glenna.

"That gives me an idea," said Lois slowly. "Let's stay up some night and catch the culprit!"

"A very fine suggestion, if only we knew when the ghost planned to parade. Unfortunately, his visits are

few and far between. We might need to keep watch for months, and that would be too large an order for me."

"Now that it's Spring, I have a hunch our ghost will make more frequent appearances. In fact, I shouldn't be surprised if Saturday night would be a good time to be on the alert."

"Why Saturday night?"

"Oh, I just have a feeling about it," said Lois. "What do you say?"

"Well, all right," Glenna agreed reluctantly. "But I'll have to tell Mrs. Horn. And now, let's get to bed. It's after eleven o'clock."

The girls were tired and failed to hear the alarm clock when it went off at six o'clock the next morning. However, ten minutes later, Mrs. Horn rapped on the bedroom door.

"Six o'clock!" she called.

"We must have overslept!" gasped Glenna, springing from bed.

"As soon as you have dressed, please come right down," instructed Mrs. Horn, and the girls noticed then that her voice sounded agitated.

"Is anything wrong?" questioned Glenna, but the housekeeper had gone away.

The girls dressed swiftly and were downstairs ahead of the student roomers. Mrs. Horn came into the

living room from the kitchen where she had been squeezing orange juice.

"Glenna, please step into the library," she requested.

Wondering at the housekeeper's tone, both girls entered the adjoining room. The blinds were drawn. At first they noticed nothing amiss, and then Lois was the one to observe why Mrs. Horn had brought them there. She gave a startled cry as her gaze turned toward the fireplace.

"Terry's picture! It's gone!"

CHAPTER XI

THE MISSING PICTURE

In the place where the painting of little Terry had hung there was now only a yellow rectangle of faded paper which did not match the remainder of the wall covering.

"I noticed the picture was missing when I came in here early this morning," said Mrs. Horn. "Glenna, did you remove it?"

"Why, no."

"Then the painting has been stolen!" exclaimed the housekeeper.

Glenna and Lois looked at each other, and the same thought flashed through their minds. Could the disappearance of the picture have had any connection with the mysterious visit of the "ghost"?

"I can't understand why anyone would steal this particular picture," Glenna said slowly. "Is anything else missing, Mrs. Horn?"

"Not that I've been able to discover. The silver is all here. Oh dear, this upsets me dreadfully. Mrs. Reid set such store by that picture."

"Then why did she turn it to the wall?" Lois interposed quickly.

"Because—oh, I don't know," Mrs. Horn said impatiently. "One of the reasons I took the position was so I would be sure nothing would happen to Mrs. Reid's things, and now—this."

"Were the doors locked this morning?" inquired Glenna.

"Yes, and the downstairs windows were all fastened."

"Did you test the ones in Marjory's room?" asked Lois.

"No, I didn't go in there, of course. But it's not likely a thief would enter through an occupied bedroom."

"I can't understand why a thief would be interested in the painting in any case," said Glenna, frowning. "Do you suppose it was especially valuable?"

"I never heard that it was," responded the housekeeper. "Mrs. Reid treasured it because it was the portrait of her only son."

"I promised Mr. Clements I would take good care of everything in the house," said Glenna. "I shall have to report this loss to him, and I dread it."

"I don't see how you can be blamed," declared Lois. "You were careful about locking the house every night."

While Mrs. Horn went on with breakfast preparations, the two girls inspected the grounds, searching for evidence which might disclose how the intruder had entered the house. Passing the room occupied by Marcia and Marjory, Lois paused to regard one of the windows thoughtfully.

"It would be fairly easy for an athletic person to scramble up the rose trellis and over the sill," she remarked.

"Yes, but surely either Marcia or Marjory would have awakened," Glenna replied.

At breakfast she asked the two girls if they had heard any unusual sound during the night.

"No, I slept like a log," said Marjory. "I went to bed real early, didn't I, Marcia?"

"I don't know when you went to bed," answered her roommate.

Glenna found it difficult to keep her mind upon her school work that day and she was relieved when the last class ended. Calling at Mr. Clement's office, she told him about the painting which had disappeared, and felt somewhat comforted because he took the attitude that the loss could not have been her fault.

Glenna did not see Lois for the next few days, but Saturday evening the younger girl appeared at Ghost Gables "ready for work" as she expressed it.

"You've not told anyone we plan to keep watch tonight?" she inquired.

"Only Mrs. Horn."

"The girls have no suspicion?"

"No, I've been careful not to mention the ghost. But I fail to understand why you are so confident of success on this particular night."

"Oh, I just think it's a likely evening," Lois said

vaguely. "A nice full moon should tempt any ghost. But it's a waste of time to watch until after eleven o'clock. Around midnight or even later would be the best in my opinion."

"I should think that would be too late," protested Glenna. "The other night—"

"Saturday is different," said Lois.

She had in mind that upon week-end nights students were not required to be in their rooms until an hour later than usual, but this she did not bother to explain. She knew Glenna would never agree with her as to the identity of the mysterious visitor. Therefore, she intended to present her with proof.

The early hours of the evening were spent with bridge, Carol and Florence completing the foursome. At nine o'clock Marjory put away a book she was reading and went to her room, giving the excuse that she was tired.

"How that girl has changed since the first of the year," remarked Carol after the door had closed. "She doesn't even care for dates any more. Have you noticed how much time she spends at such prosaic occupations as studying and sleeping?"

"Even so, she was posted as being delinquent in math," replied Florence. "This makes the second time this semester too. They say if your name is listed the third time, you usually flunk."

The bridge game went on until Lois and Carol were

so far ahead of their opponents that it no longer was fun. Then the table was put away and the girls went to their separate rooms. Lois and Glenna did not disrobe, but impatiently awaited the passage of time.

After the clock had struck the hour of eleven, Glenna made the rounds, locking doors and windows. She did not fasten the basement exit since she and Lois planned to slip out that way.

"I feel guilty," Glenna declared. "If the other girls should learn of this, they might think I had broken a rule."

"Oh, you're in the clear whatever happens," Lois said carelessly. "Mrs. Horn gave you permission, didn't she?"

The house was dark and still as the girls let themselves out the back way. Lois led her companion toward the river, and well protected by the tall trees, circled again toward the house. She selected a hiding place near the edge of the woods, a location from which they could see both the river and the house.

Lois had prepared herself for a long vigil. From behind a clump of bushes she removed two collapsible camp chairs each with a back rest, a woolen blanket, and a cardboard box filled with sandwiches and chocolate candy.

"I believe in doing my sleuthing in comfort," she chuckled. "That's why I hid these things here early this evening."

The chairs Lois placed side by side, and when she and Glenna had seated themselves, wrapped the warm blanket over their knees.

"Snug as two little bugs in a rug," she declared. "The breeze from the river gets real cold and damp around midnight."

"You must be planning on an all night stay."

"No, I'm hoping we'll have luck in a couple of hours. Here, fortify yourself with a chocolate."

At first it was rather exciting to sit at the fringe of the woods, nibbling bon-bons and chatting about any number of subjects, but after an hour the candy disappeared, and the camp chairs became uncomfortable.

"I wish the ghost would hurry if he's coming," Glenna yawned. "I'm getting sleepy."

"It's only a quarter past twelve," Lois said, lighting a match to look at her wrist watch. "I didn't expect anything to happen before this time."

Another half hour elapsed, and Glenna, despite her best efforts, dozed off. Suddenly her head dropped down, and she awoke with a start. Lois had given her a hard shake. Glenna lifted her head and peered intently out into the darkness.

"Wake up!"

"The ghost—?"

"Yes, look over there!"

Lois motioned toward a path which led up from the direction of the river. A white figure could be seen

moving stealthily from the protection of the trees, hurrying toward the house.

Glenna started to move from her hiding place, but Lois gripped her wrist.

"Wait until I give the signal," she whispered. "Then we'll dash out and capture Mr. Ghost!"

It seemed to Glenna that they were waiting far too long. The white figure flitted across the lawn, passing not twenty-five feet from where they were hidden, and went on to the east side of the house. There the ghost paused, and after glancing about, started to mount the rose trellis.

"Now!" commanded Lois.

The girls slipped from their refuge, and ran noiselessly across the yard. They were close to the house before the "ghost" became aware of their approach. Escape was then cut off.

Lois seized the figure on the trellis, attacking very much like a football player, directly behind the knees. They went down together, rolling on the soft, moist earth.

Glenna seized the white sheet which covered the masquerader, and jerked it away. She gasped in astonishment.

The girl on the ground, the "ghost" who struggled furiously to free herself from Lois' iron grip, was Marjory Bennett.

CHAPTER XII

THE GHOST UNVEILED

REALIZING that her identity could not be hidden, Marjory ceased her struggles, and allowed Glenna to help her to her feet. She had lost one of her dancing slippers, and there was a long tear in her georgette evening gown.

"Just see what you have done!" she cried, glaring at Lois. "I paid twenty-five dollars for this dress!"

"Sorry," said Lois pleasantly, presenting the missing slipper with a mock bow. "You shouldn't have tried to sneak in. You know, I suspected all along that you were the ghost."

"Such a bright child!"

The window of the bedroom had been pushed up and Marcia peered out. When she saw Glenna and Lois, she gave a little moan, and with the muttered words, "I knew this would happen," retreated into the dark depths of the room again.

"So Marcia has been helping you?" Glenna asked sternly.

"No, she hasn't. It was entirely my own idea. She didn't want me to try it."

"Why did you play ghost?"

"Isn't it fairly obvious?" Marjory demanded defiantly. "I couldn't abide Mrs. Horn's silly rules, so I found a way of getting in and out of the house without disturbing her."

"You have been to a public dance?"

"Yes, I have," Marjory replied. "Now I suppose I'll be compelled to listen to a long lecture from you."

"I don't believe you realize the seriousness of your offense," Glenna said quietly. "This easily may mean your expulsion from college."

The words stunned Marjory for a moment. "I didn't suppose you'd tattle," she said in a different tone.

"Call it by that name if you wish, Marjory. You know very well it is my duty to report you."

"I can't see that I've committed any great crime. You've never liked me, that's the trouble."

"I do like you, Marjory, but not always your ways. For instance, taking that picture from the library—"

"Taking what picture?" questioned Marjory in honest amazement.

"The painting which hung above the fireplace. It disappeared on the night of one of your ghosting escapades."

"Well, I had nothing to do with it. Really I didn't. What would I want with a picture?"

Marjory spoke so earnestly that she convinced Glenna

and Lois of her honesty. Yet they were more than ever puzzled as to what had become of the missing painting.

"How long have you been slipping in and out of the window?" Glenna inquired.

"Only the past ten days. I thought of the idea last fall when I heard the ghost story, but I never tried it out until just lately. That's the truth. Please don't report me, Glenna. I had one warning from the Dean, and if she learns of this, I'll be finished."

"Shouldn't you have thought of that before, Marjory?"

"You're breaking rules too or you wouldn't be here!"

"Mrs. Horn gave Lois and me permission to stay out."

"Well, it's just as fair for one as it is for another! Oh, have a heart, Glenna. If I have to leave school, I'll not get to compete for the Walker prize, and you know how much it means to me. I simply must win."

"I do realize that music is your one great interest," Glenna said soberly.

"Then don't report me." Marjory was quick to press the advantage. "I promise I'll not slip out of the house ever again. I'll do anything you say, if only you'll give me another chance."

"I don't wish to see you leave school, Marjory."

"Then you'll forget about tonight?"

"Yes," said Glenna after a moment. "But remember, if any more rules are broken I shall be compelled to turn in my report."

"Thanks, Glenna. And don't worry. From this day forth my deportment will be perfect."

With a silvery laugh which held a note of triumph, Marjory mounted the rose trellis and vanished into her room.

Lois and Glenna walked slowly back to the rear door.

"Was I too easy do you think?" asked the latter.

"Perhaps," answered Lois, "but then, you wouldn't be Glenna if you weren't sympathetic and soft. What will you tell Mrs. Horn?"

"I don't know. Maybe she'll just take it for granted we didn't catch the ghost. Do you think Marjory will keep her promise?"

"I never heard of a leopard changing its spots," Lois said dryly.

Glenna was relieved when Mrs. Horn asked no embarrassing questions the next morning. Apparently, no one save Marcia had any suspicion of what had transpired, and Marjory had pledged her roommate to secrecy even before Glenna talked with the girl about the incident.

"I really am placing you and Marjory upon your honor," she told Marcia. "If I were to move you to an upstairs room, Mrs. Horn would guess what was wrong. I am giving your roommate another chance, but only

upon the condition that you both promise to abide by the rules and report any infractions."

"I'll not allow Marjory to try the ghost trick again," Marcia declared. "College means too much to me to risk losing my own privileges."

The days passed swiftly, and with a feeling of regret, Glenna realized that in a few months her first year in college would reach its end. Ghost Gables had proven itself a successful enterprise, and the following season she would take additional roomers. She was thinking too of keeping the house open for the summer school session.

With canoes in great demand at the McDonald dock, Lois came less often to Ghost Gables. One Saturday afternoon when she did put in an appearance, it was to learn from Mrs. Horn that Glenna had gone for a hike with Howard Gregg.

"Why don't you wait?" the housekeeper suggested. "She should be back any minute now."

"Well, I might stay around a little while," Lois said.

"Perhaps you'd not mind answering the telephone if it should ring. I thought I would run down to the grocery store."

"I'll take care of everything," promised Lois. "Where are the other girls?"

"Marjory is in her room working on her musical composition. I believe Carol and Florence went to the library."

After Mrs. Horn had left the house with her market basket, Lois wandered from room to room, wishing that she had a means of occupying her time. In the library she paused to stare at the yellow rectangle of wall-paper over the mantel, reflecting how strange it was that Terry's missing picture never had been traced.

Presently, noticing that a bracket which held one of the curtain rods had come loose from the wall, she decided to surprise Glenna by fixing it. She remembered that Mrs. Horn kept a dish of screws and tacks on the high shelf of the kitchen cupboard.

Mounting the three-step ladder which was kept under the sink, Lois found the assortment. As she picked through the dish searching for a suitable screw, she came upon a key. It was rusty and old looking, and Lois was certain she had never seen it before.

"Mrs. Horn probably found it somewhere in the house and dropped it into this dish," the girl thought. "It looks like a door key."

Suddenly an inspiration came to her. There was a chance that it might fit the door of the locked bedroom!

"It does look as if it's about the right size!" she told herself.

Lois knew that Glenna would never approve, but with the college year rapidly drawing to a close, drastic methods must be adopted if ever she were to learn the secret guarded by the locked door. To go through life,

never knowing, always wondering, would be more than any human person could bear.

She would have to hurry or Mrs. Horn would be coming home. Lois ran up the stairway, and scarcely daring to hope, inserted the rusty key in the lock. To her delight, it was a perfect fit. When she turned the key, she heard a faint click.

Lois hesitated before opening the door, savoring to the full this moment of suspense.

"I wish Glenna were here," she thought. "But in that case, I'd never get inside. Here goes!"

She turned the knob and gently pushed on the door. It stuck so she thrust the weight of her shoulder against it. As it suddenly gave way, she fell forward into the room.

The shutters had been left closed, and Lois could see nothing. She groped her way to a window and let in the light. Slowly her gaze roved about the room.

"Why, it's just an ordinary bedroom," she thought.

Lois could not have told what she expected to find, but she was conscious of a deep disappointment. She had cherished a hope that in this room she would find a solution to the mystery, an answer to why Mrs. Reid had closed her house and had turned Terry's picture to the wall.

Thick layers of dust covered the bed, the dresser and the desk. It was plainly a boy's room, Lois observed,

noting a pair of boxing gloves which hung by a peg on the wall. A tennis racket with a broken string leaned in a corner of the room as if carelessly placed there by its owner.

"This must have been Terry's room," Lois thought in awe. "And Mrs. Reid locked the door, because he did something which offended her. But I'm no nearer to learning what the misunderstanding was all about than I was at first!"

There was a door opening into a clothes closet. Here a few garments were scattered on the floor as if dropped or discarded by one who had hurriedly packed. Examining bureau drawers, Lois found they had been cleaned out save for a few neckties, shirts and miscellaneous articles.

"Terry left home before his mother decided to close the house," Lois mused. "It's easy to tell he packed up in great haste. From the size of the discarded garments I'd judge he must have been considerably older than when that painting was made."

The desk, a crudely constructed piece of furniture which might have been made in a manual training class, next drew her attention. As she lowered the slanting lid, several sheets of heavy paper, yellow with age, and very dusty, slid to the floor.

"Now this may be something!" Lois thought jubilantly.

But in stooping to pick up the papers she saw that

they were not personal communications. The first sheet bore the words, written in a boyish scrawl: "Song of the River."

There were six pages, and each one had been ruled off into musical lines and spaces.

"Terry must have been a musician," Lois mused. "This seems to be an original composition."

She was studying the score so intently that she failed to hear a step in the hallway. Not until her name was spoken did she have any intimation she no longer was alone. Turning quickly, she saw Marjory Bennett standing in the doorway.

"Hello, Lois," the girl said smugly. "My, but you find interesting things to do. Mind if I come in?"

And without waiting for an invitation, she stepped over the threshold.

CHAPTER XIII

FOUND IN A DESK

MARJORY gazed with interest about the bedroom, remarking casually: "I've always wondered why this place was kept locked. But I'll venture dear Glenna doesn't know you're prowling about in here."

"You may be sure I shall tell her when she comes home," replied Lois, trying to hide her irritation.

"I shouldn't if I were you. Glenna has very rigid ideas about rules and honor and the like."

"So have I. You needn't think I would enter this room without telling her!"

"Oh, no," said Marjory, "I am sure you wouldn't," but her tone expressed that she thought exactly the opposite. She came toward Lois. "What's this you've found?"

"Nothing," replied Lois sullenly.

She replaced the sheaf of papers in the desk, but before she could close down the lid, Marjory reached for it.

"Let me see that score," she commanded. "Is it original?"

"I don't know anything about it. I found it here in the desk."

" 'Song of the River,' " Marjory read aloud. "Stupid name, but the music looks rather interesting. I'll try it on the piano."

"No, we have no right to do that," Lois protested.

"And did you have permission to unlock this room in the first place?" countered Marjory. "Haven't you any curiosity at all? I should think you would like to hear the piece."

Lois was curious to learn the nature of the composition, and so her protests became less vigorous. She followed Marjory downstairs to the big square piano.

"I'm sure it must be an original score," the girl declared, smoothing out the sheets. "The notes are hard to read though—they've faded so badly."

She executed a few runs on the keyboard "to limber her fingers," and then crashed into the opening measures of the composition. As she played, the music became softer and Lois, although she made no claim to having a musical ear, was aware of a simple yet haunting strain which reminded her of the peaceful flow of the Great Bear river.

"Turn the page! Turn the page!" cried Marjory impatiently.

Lois hastened to obey, awkwardly fumbling the sheets.

The music rolled out, filling the room. Marjory forgot her companion, and her face glowed with excitement.

"The tones are marvelous," she murmured. "Marvelous!"

Just then the front door opened, and Glenna, dressed in hiking clothes, came into the living room.

"Why, hello, Lois," she said cheerfully, and then to Marjory at the piano: "Please don't stop playing. I like that piece. I don't recall having heard it before."

"Glenna," said Lois, "I have a confession to make."

"A confession?"

"Yes, I'll explain later, but right now I guess it's enough to say that I found a key which unlocked the upstairs bedroom. I went in and looked around a bit."

"Lois!"

"I knew you would be shocked, but I simply had to do it, and anyway I never made Mr. Clements any promise. I found this musical composition in the desk, and Marjory was just playing it over for me."

"Beautiful, isn't it?" asked Marjory whirling around to the piano again. "Just listen to this part, only I should play it with more 'calmato.' I shall need to practice before I can do the selection justice."

Glenna did not speak, but she came over to the piano and fingered the sheets of music.

"You're not terribly angry, are you?" Lois asked uneasily.

"Naturally I am not very pleased," Glenna said in a quiet voice. "I gave my promise to Mr. Clements—"

"Yes, and you kept it too," interposed Lois. "I

shouldn't have done it, I know, but I simply had to learn what was in that room. Otherwise I should have died of curiosity."

"We'll say no more about it now," said Glenna. "Did you lock the room again?"

"No."

"Then please do," Glenna requested. "Put everything back just as you found it."

"Aren't you going up there?" Lois asked in amazement.

"No, I should prefer not to under the circumstance."

Feeling very small and ashamed, Lois went over to the piano to take the musical composition.

"Oh, not this!" exclaimed Marjory. "Please allow me to keep it."

Lois glanced questioningly toward Glenna who said: "Everything must be put back exactly as it was found."

"You don't understand!" Marjory cried. "The composition is so unusual. I wish to study it."

"If the piece were mine, I should be very glad to have you make use of it. But it isn't mine. You understand my position."

"I understand you're always afraid you'll do something you shouldn't," Marjory retorted, getting up from the piano stool. "Keep your old composition if you wish!"

She turned and walked into her own room, firmly closing the door.

"I'm sorry," Lois said contritely.

"Perhaps I am too strict," Glenna murmured, sinking into a chair. "I try so hard to make fair decisions."

"They are fair," declared Lois. "It was outrageous of me to enter that room without your permission. I shouldn't have done it, only I found the key and I was carried away with the idea!"

"I understand," Glenna said, "and I really can't blame you."

"As it turned out I didn't learn very much. The room had belonged to Terry."

"I rather thought it would be his."

"Apparently, he had packed his belongings in a hurry and went away somewhere. I was looking at the musical composition when Marjory walked in. Glenna—" Lois was struck by a sudden thought. "—perhaps Terry's music was the cause of the disagreement!"

"I don't understand what you mean."

"Perhaps he ran away from home because his mother tried to force him to take up some career he hated! Maybe she insisted he become a lawyer or a doctor."

"We're not even certain there was a disagreement."

"Oh, there must have been, else Mrs. Reid never would have locked that room or turned Terry's picture to the wall. But I admit I am disappointed. Now that I've seen inside the bedroom, there's nothing else to dis-

cover. So far as the mystery is concerned, I apparently have reached the end of the road."

"I never did feel that you would learn very much by getting inside the locked room," said Glenna. "But at least your curiosity has been satisfied."

"You're not provoked at me, are you?"

"No," smiled Glenna. "Now run on upstairs and lock the door before anyone comes."

Lois did as she was instructed, replacing the musical composition in the desk, and bringing the key to Glenna after she had locked the bedroom.

"Where did you find it in the first place?" she asked Lois.

"In the cupboard."

"That doesn't seem a very safe place to me," Glenna said. "I'll drop it into this vase on the bookcase."

Mrs. Horn returned from her marketing trip and the subject of the locked room was not mentioned.

"I really came over to invite you to go with me to the theatre tonight," Lois told her friend. "We have an extra ticket for a play at the Rialto, but I suppose you wouldn't care about it now."

"Why, I should love to go," accepted Glenna instantly. "We'll forget all about what happened. You committed no great crime."

"That's the way I felt about it," Lois sighed in relief. "But I was afraid you wouldn't agree."

Later that evening she called for Glenna in the family car and they drove to the theatre. The play was an entertaining one, but the girls were compelled to leave before the final curtain so that Glenna would be home by eleven o'clock.

"I begin to appreciate Marjory's viewpoint about rules," Glenna said as they drew near The Gables. "It is hard to have one's pleasures curtailed."

Lois brought the car to a standstill directly across the street from the house. She did not listen attentively as Glenna thanked her for a pleasant evening because she was leaning far out of the window, peering up at the second floor of Ghost Gables.

"Glenna!" she interrupted. "Look up there!"

The older girl had stepped from the car. She too raised her eyes toward the second story where lights glowed. Through the half-open shutters Carol could be seen working at her desk.

However, that was not the scene which had drawn an exclamation from Lois. Glenna's gaze roved on to the far end of the gabled house. A dim light was visible in Terry's locked room!

CHAPTER XIV

A LIGHT IN THE WINDOW

"SOMEONE must be up in that room!" Glenna cried. "We'll find out about it!"

Abandoning the car by the curb, the girls quietly let themselves into the house and ran up the stairway. The hall was dark and deserted.

Glenna tested the door at the end of the corridor.

"Locked," she said.

"Shall I get the key?" asked Lois quickly.

Glenna hesitated, and then nodded.

"This is an emergency," she replied. "I must find out who is in that room."

Lois found the key in the vase where it had been hidden and returned. She cautiously unlocked the door.

The bedroom was dark, and there was no indication anyone had been inside the chamber.

"Well, this is certainly queer," murmured Lois. "I was certain I saw a light."

"So was I," added Glenna in a puzzled voice. "But no one is here now."

"The air smells fairly fresh as if a window had been opened only a few minutes ago," Lois commented.

"Is everything just as it was when first you entered the room?"

"Yes, as far as I can tell."

"Perhaps the ghost is paying us another call," Glenna said, attempting to joke. "Only I thought we had downed that story for good. This disturbs me."

"We may have been mistaken," Lois said thoughtfully. "It's just possible there was a reflection on the window pane."

After another curious glance at the furnishings of the room, Glenna locked the door again, and dropped the key into her pocket.

"We might ask Carol and Florence if they heard any unusual sound," she said.

The two freshmen were sprawled on the bed, studying their English lessons. At their invitation to enter, Glenna went in and sat on the couch. Lois lingered by the door, for it was late, and she knew she should hurry home.

"Have a nice time at the theatre?" asked Carol.

"Yes, the play was marvelous," replied Glenna. "Did you girls stay here all evening?"

"We have an English quiz Monday," Florence explained. "No chance of going anywhere with one of Professor Kirby's brain puzzlers coming up. We have too much studying to do."

"Were there any callers while I was away?"

"Marjory had one of her boy friends here for about

an hour," Carol contributed. "But he left before nine o'clock."

"You haven't heard anyone in the hall?"

The two girls glanced at Glenna in surprise, aware that her questions had a purpose.

"Why, no," said Carol. "We've been alone here."

"Come to think of it, I did hear someone hurrying down the stairway not more than ten minutes ago," Florence declared after a moment. "The door was closed and I paid no attention. I assumed it was either Mrs. Horn or one of the girls. Is anything wrong?"

"No," Glenna assured her quickly. "Lois and I thought we saw a light in the room at the end of the corridor. Apparently, we were mistaken."

"Carol and I have been here all evening. Still, we didn't hear you and Lois come upstairs either."

"Don't give the matter a thought," Glenna said, arising. "The light may have been a reflection from your own window."

This explanation entirely satisfied the two girls, although a moment's thought would have convinced them that the windows of the upper floor were so arranged that one could not possibly reflect light to another.

Glenna accompanied Lois to the front door, and they stood whispering together.

"Someone *was* in that room," the younger girl declared. "Don't you feel sure of it?"

"Yes, I do," agreed Glenna. "I hate to distrust Mrs. Horn and yet I wonder—"

"She must have found the key for otherwise it would not have appeared in the kitchen cupboard. Do you think the vase is a safe place for it?"

"No, from now on I'll keep it in my pocketbook. Or I might turn it over to Mr. Clements."

"Don't do that," urged Lois. "We might have occasion to use it ourselves—I mean, you can't tell what will happen. An emergency might arise."

"I do hope all that silly ghost talk isn't revived," Glenna said anxiously. "And yet, I'm beginning to agree there *is* some mystery about this house."

"In the next few days I intend to do a little intensive sleuthing," Lois confided. "For a long while I've meant to visit an old lady who lives in Ardmore, a Mrs. Breen, the widow of a former college president."

"Oh, I've heard of her!"

"She's quite the aristocratic dowager and seldom leaves her home. But she knew everyone formerly connected with the college and is still very influential on the campus."

"You believe she might have been acquainted with Professor Kohler and his sister?"

"Yes, I do, Glenna. I've been trying to think of some means of seeing her, but she's usually "not at home" to unknown callers. Mother has been invited to a tea there tomorrow, and I intend to tag right along.

If Mrs. Breen has any information about Ghost Gables, depend upon me to extract it!"

"You certainly are persistent," smiled Glenna.

Above all other forms of social gathering, Lois detested a "tea." It meant cleaning her gloves, manicuring her fingernails, wearing a despised hat, and being very careful about saying the right thing or eating too many cakes.

Mrs. Breen's teas were always boring affairs with the drawing room over-heated and over-crowded, but Lois congratulated herself because she was there at all. Her mother had not been in favor of bringing her.

Elderly women sat in stiff little groups, chatting and sipping their tea and pretending they were having a perfectly delightful afternoon. Lois eyed Mrs. Breen speculatively as she made a courageous return trip to the tea table for another frosted cake.

The old lady appeared charming in a lavender silk gown which rustled as she moved about the room. Her hair was snow white, but her blue eyes still had the sparkle of youth. Lois decided that she seemed to be a very gracious person. Yet, there was no opportunity to talk with her for she was constantly surrounded by eager guests.

Several times Mrs. McDonald suggested it was time to leave. Always Lois protested: "Oh, Mother, so soon?"

By four o'clock the crowd had thinned, and Mrs.

Breen, seemingly wearied, sought a quiet corner of the room. If ever she were to have an opportunity, this was it, Lois thought. Abandoning her astonished mother, she glided across the room, and sank into an empty chair beside the old lady.

"How do you do, my dear," smiled Mrs. Breen. "I was highly flattered when your mother telephoned to ask if she might bring you this afternoon. So few of the younger generation take an interest in such affairs."

"Your tea is perfectly delightful," Lois declared, appropriating a phrase she had heard many times that afternoon. "One meets such interesting people." Realizing that at any moment a guest might break in upon the tete-a-tete, she determined to plunge straight to her subject, even at the risk of seeming abrupt. "I was just saying to Mother, you must have known many fascinating individuals, Mrs. Breen. Especially professors!"

"Yes," agreed the old lady, "I have met every instructor who ever taught at Ardmore."

"Then you knew Professor Kohler."

"Indeed yes, he and my husband were very good friends. Professor Kohler taught biology here many years ago. Let me see, that was before the war—how time does fly!"

"Do you recall when Professor Kohler left Ardmore?" questioned Lois eagerly.

"Indeed, I do. It was the year we entered the war—

1917. Since then he has been at the University of Illinois. However, when I talked with him a few months ago, he spoke of retiring."

"You have seen Professor Kohler recently?" Lois stammered, scarcely believing her ears.

"Oh, yes, he dined at my home. Weren't you aware he came here and delivered a lecture at the auditorium?"

"No, I am sorry to have missed it."

"What a pity. Professor Kohler is a talented lecturer and often tours from college to college. However, you may have another opportunity to hear him. He returns here late this month, and will conduct a special lecture course in biology open to a select group of students."

Thrilled by this piece of news, Lois quickly asked another question before Mrs. Breen could switch to a different subject.

"Did you ever hear what became of Professor Kohler's nephew, Terry? I understand he was a talented musician."

Mrs. Breen gazed at Lois with startled eyes.

"Why, my dear," she said in a hushed voice. "Terry lost his life during the War. He was killed in action."

"Oh," gasped Lois, shocked by the information. "Then that was why Professor Kohler and his sister, Mrs. Reid, closed up the gabled house."

Mrs. Breen hesitated as if reluctant to disclose more.

"No," she said at last, "the house was boarded up at

the time poor Terry enlisted. I never knew exactly what did happen, but it was my belief Professor Kohler and his sister disagreed about the boy going off to war. Mrs. Reid bitterly opposed the idea of Terry taking up arms, while Professor Kohler held to the opinion the boy owed a duty to his country. In the end Terry had his way."

"And his mother never forgave him?"

"Not while he lived, I am afraid. She closed up the house immediately after he enlisted, and I never saw her again."

"What became of Professor Kohler?"

"He asked for a leave of absence from the College and went away. Later he obtained a place at Illinois University, and has returned here only upon rare occasions."

"His sister is with him?" Lois inquired.

"No, my dear. Terry's death only made the breach between them wider. Professor Kohler never speaks of his sister. Poor man, he has altered greatly since so much trouble came upon him."

Mrs. Breen stared meditatively out into the garden, and then with a start recalled her young guest.

"Why have I bored you with all this?" she asked lightly. "Tell me about your interests. Are you playing hockey?"

They discussed various subjects, and then as a woman

came to speak with Mrs. Breen, Lois excused herself and slipped away. Riding home with her mother she was unusually subdued.

"You didn't have a very good time, did you, Lois?"

"It was better than any other tea I ever attended, Mother. I had an interesting talk with Mrs. Breen."

"Yes, I observed you were getting on well with her," smiled Mrs. McDonald. "At times, Lois, your ladylike behavior amazes me."

The afternoon had been worth the trouble, Lois reflected, for she had gleaned more information than she had hoped. Yet in a way, she felt almost sorry she had learned so much from Mrs. Breen. Terry's picture had fired her imagination, and never once until this day had she thought of him save as a very attractive person whom she might someday have the pleasure of meeting. It was not easy to realize that he was dead.

"Actually, Glenna was right," she told herself. "I built up a mystery about Ghost Gables which never existed. I might have learned the answer to my questions any time, if only I had gone to Mrs. Breen. But what a pity Professor Kohler and his sister remain estranged."

Yet there were a number of angles of the affair which had not been explained, Lois mused. Why had Mrs. Reid allowed her house to stand vacant so many years and then suddenly decided to offer it for rent? What

had become of Terry's picture, stolen from the library? And how could one explain the mysterious light which had burned in Terry's room?"

Lois was comforted by the thought that Professor Kohler would soon be at Ardmore College again. She felt provoked because she had overlooked his arrival some months earlier, but she had seen no notice of it in the papers. This time she would not fail to see him. And if he were an approachable person it might even be possible to ask a few questions or to discuss the missing painting.

The following day after school, Lois hastened to Ghost Gables to report all she had learned to Glenna. Drawing near the house, she observed that a light truck had been parked by the curb. As she watched, a man carried a steamer trunk from the house. He shoved it into his van and drove away.

"One of the girls must be leaving Ghost Gables," Lois thought in astonishment. "Glenna didn't say anything about it yesterday. Now I wonder what has happened?"

CHAPTER XV

DISCIPLINE FOR MARJORY

GLENNA was hulling plump strawberries into a bright green bowl, preparing them for a shortcake which Mrs. Horn planned to serve that evening for dinner.

"Oh, the trunk?" she smiled, in response to Lois' question, as the girl came into the kitchen and perched herself on a high stool. "You might guess, it belongs to Marjory."

"But why is she leaving, Glenna?"

"Because I told her to go. I couldn't be responsible for her conduct another day."

"Has she been climbing out windows again?"

"Yes, I rather suspected it several nights ago. And then yesterday Marcia came to me and told me. I had placed both girls upon their honor, you see."

"I don't blame you for telling her to go."

"I was sorry to do it, but I felt she had been given her chance."

"Is she leaving college?"

"Oh, I didn't report to the Dean," Glenna explained. "Considering that Marjory is trying so hard to win the Walker prize, I couldn't be that heartless. I merely insisted that she take a room at the dormitory."

"They will make her walk the chalk mark there. Windows are built so high from the ground one can't climb into them without a step ladder."

Lois helped herself to a large strawberry, and then, the subject of Marjory exhausted, told Glenna all she had learned from Mrs. Breen.

"How sad that the boy was killed in the War," Glenna said. "His poor mother must have been broken hearted, especially when she was so opposed to him enlisting in the first place."

"I feel just as sorry for Professor Kohler," Lois declared. "I imagine Mrs. Reid blamed him for the boy's death."

"I can't see that it was his fault."

"No, of course not, except that he was in favor of Terry enlisting, and probably took the boy's part against his mother."

"I doubt that Mrs. Horn knew of Terry's death," Glenna said thoughtfully. "At least she never mentioned it."

"Except for a few minor details, I fear my so-called mystery is played out," Lois sighed. "Oh, dear, with Marjory gone, the old house won't even have a ghost."

"I'm not so sure about that," declared Glenna, and anxiety crept into her voice. "Last night I heard a noise in the yard. When I went to the window I thought I saw a dark figure running toward the river."

"Marjory probably."

"I would have thought so, only Marcia told me that the girl happened to be in her room at the time."

"This ghost business never was cleared up completely," Lois said after a moment. "At first we thought it was Mrs. Horn, and then we caught Marjory. But I think with her out of the house, the excitement will die down."

"I hope so," sighed Glenna. "I shouldn't mind ending my first year at college with a few peaceful days."

Both girls were elated to know that Professor Kohler was scheduled to lecture again at Ardmore. In thinking back, Glenna decided that she must have seen an announcement of it somewhere before the name came to have significance.

Within a few days the college newspaper carried an item saying that Professor Kohler would arrive on the fifteenth of the month. He was booked for no public lectures, but would give a two weeks' intensive course to students interested in biology.

"If I were registered in college I would take the course just to become acquainted with Professor Kohler," Lois declared. "It's a wonderful opportunity for you, Glenna."

"Yes, it is," the older girl agreed. "I've always been interested in biology too."

"Why don't you sign up for the course?"

"I shall," promised Glenna.

"Maybe you'll get a chance to talk with him about

this house. We could clear up quite a few puzzling details if only he would answer our questions."

"I don't feel like prying into a person's private life," Glenna replied. "But I shall certainly take the course."

That very afternoon she registered for the series of lecture-discussion hours, and learned that already the class was very nearly filled.

"Professor Kohler reserves the right to reject any student whose previous studies have not prepared him for the course," she was told. "His approval is merely a matter of routine in your case."

"My grades are satisfactory?"

"Yes, here is your admission card for the course. Professor Kohler will be in Room 10 of the Liberal Arts building next Thursday morning. Present the card to him and he will sign it."

Glenna dropped the matter from her mind until the following week. Then, after leaving the Women's gymnasium, she sought Room 10. A long line of students stood in the hallway, each with a card similar to her own.

"You'll have a good wait," advised one of the girls as Glenna fell in behind her. "I've been here half an hour now. Professor Kohler was late."

The ringing of a class bell caused many of the students to desert their places, and the line began to move rapidly. Soon Glenna reached the doorway of Room

10 and was able to see the man who sat at the desk, checking cards.

Professor Kohler might have been sixty-five years of age, the girl thought. His hair was almost white, and his eyes behind their glasses had a remote expression. His voice was low and cultured, his face both aloof and sad.

The professor glanced briefly at the cards as they were presented, scarcely hesitating as he marked his approval. Occasionally, he asked a student a few questions, but he never failed to sign his name.

Glenna's turn came presently. She laid her card on the desk.

"Glenna Brockman," Professor Kohler read aloud and frowned. "You live on Ferndale Road."

"Yes," said Glenna, and was afraid to add more.

The professor stared a long while at the card.

"I see you are a freshman," he said at last. "My course will be too advanced for you. Therefore, I regret I cannot sign your card."

"But Professor Kohler, I am deeply interested in biology. They told me at the office—"

"It is quite impossible, Miss Brockman," said the professor in a quiet but firm voice. He turned to the next student in line. "Your card, please."

A flush overspread Glenna's cheeks as she hastily retreated. She was aware that the other students were

glancing at her curiously and with sympathy. Of all those who had applied for admission to the class, she alone had been rejected.

Glenna did not believe that Professor Kohler had turned her down because she was a freshman, for the girl just ahead of her in line also had been a first year student.

"He didn't even bother to question her," she thought. "Either he didn't like my appearance or it was because of the address. He must have noticed that I was living in the old Reid house!"

There was slight comfort in knowing that she had been turned away because of her association with Ghost Gables. Glenna had looked forward to taking the class for its own sake.

Lois too was bitterly disappointed.

"If Professor Kohler doesn't want you in his class, I suppose there's no hope he'd answer any of our questions if we went to him," she sighed. "Oh, dear, why are folks so provoking?"

Just then Mrs. Horn came in from the kitchen.

"Glenna," she said, "I wish you would get a padlock for the shed."

"Has anything been taken?" Glenna asked.

"Yes, I've been keeping the potatoes out there, you know. Just now I went out to get a pan of them and almost every potato was gone. I've never known anyone to take things from this neighborhood before."

"I'll get a padlock the next time I go into town," promised Glenna.

"Another thing," added Mrs. Horn anxiously, "I feel confident someone is prowling around the house at night. I don't like it."

"Have you seen anyone?"

"No, but I heard footsteps last evening—it must have been about eleven-thirty. I am positive someone was walking in the garden, but it was so dark I couldn't tell."

"Apparently the ghost mystery isn't solved after all," Lois commented. "Since Marjory has left, one can't blame her."

"I am afraid it may be a tramp," declared Mrs. Horn. "One came here the other day and asked for food. His face has haunted me ever since. This morning I noticed the smoke from a fire rising up through the trees, and I thought right away the fellow might be camping somewhere near."

"You didn't tell me about the tramp," said Glenna.

"Oh, they come along every few days, but this fellow was different. He talked well and apparently had seen better days. He asked a great many questions, too."

"What sort of questions?" inquired Glenna.

"Oh, he asked about the house—who lived here. He wanted work around the place, but I told him we had nothing for him to do. I never trust a tramp."

"Did you give him food?" Lois questioned.

"He didn't ask for any. But like as not he's the one who took the potatoes from the shed."

"Where did you see the fire burning?" Lois inquired after a moment.

"It was down by the river. I'll show you."

Mrs. Horn took the girl to the window and as nearly as she could, pointed out the place where she had seen smoke rising.

"That might be over by Eagle Point," Lois remarked.

She waited until Mrs. Horn had returned to the kitchen, and then said in an undertone to Glenna: "What do you say to doing a little exploring along the shore? We might be able to find that tramp."

"What good would it do? I have no proof he took the potatoes."

"No, but it's well to learn where he is hiding himself," Lois insisted. "If he keeps ghosting around at night, you ought to report to the police."

Glenna allowed herself to be persuaded, and the two girls set off through the woods with Pal running ahead of them. Lois knew the way to Eagle Point, but upon reaching there they saw no sign of anyone.

"Mrs. Horn could have been mistaken about the location of the fire," Glenna remarked after they had looked carefully about.

"Still this place would make a good hide-out for a tramp," Lois replied.

The point was covered with a dense tangle of bushes and sapling trees, a veritable jungle which had never been penetrated by paths.

"Let's go back," Glenna urged. "I don't like it here."

Lois whistled for Pal, but the dog had disappeared into the underbrush. He did not answer her call.

"Now what has become of that dog?" she demanded crossly. "He would have to run off."

"Won't he come back to Ghost Gables by himself?"

"He should, but I don't like to take a chance."

Lois whistled again and called the dog's name. As the girls searched at the fringe of the bushes, wondering if they would be compelled to penetrate deeper into the thicket, they were relieved to hear the dog coming. A moment later he squeezed out into the clearing, his white coat matted with burs and nettles.

"Why, see what he has in his mouth!" Lois exclaimed. "Come here, Pal!"

Pal obligingly ran toward his mistress and dropped a man's brown felt hat at her feet.

"Where did you get it, Pal?" Lois asked sternly.

The collie sniffed at the hat lying on the ground. Then he looked up at Lois, his intelligent eyes shining. He whined as if he were trying to speak.

"It's a shame Pal doesn't know any words," Lois said as she stooped down and caressed her pet. "He would tell us all about it."

"And I know what he would say," remarked Glenna.

"Oh, I do, too," Lois answered. "He would tell us that there is someone back in the woods."

"And that he sneaked off with his hat at an unwary moment," Glenna concluded.

Pal seemed to realize that he was under discussion for he yawned long and expressively. He did not seem to like it very well. It was as if he resented human interference with canine capers.

"You're not going to get out of it so easily," Lois said as she reached down and picked up the hat. "Come on, Pal! We are going to return this to its owner."

She started down the trail with the dog at her heels but Glenna called upon her to wait.

"I don't like the idea of your going into that jungle," she said uneasily. "The owner of the hat might be a desperate character for all we know."

"Oh, that isn't likely," Lois replied in an off-hand manner. "He's probably just a tramp."

"I can't let you go alone," Glenna protested. "I'll join you."

"You might ruin your dress," Lois objected. "My clothes are old and it won't matter if they are torn. You wait here, Glenna. If I get lost I'll halloo!"

Further remonstrance was futile, so Glenna brushed off a fallen log with her handkerchief and sat down.

"If you get into trouble shout as loudly as you can," she directed.

"Oh, I'm not afraid," Lois laughed. "Not with Pal along. He has a good set of teeth."

Showing the hat to the dog and sternly commanding him to "take it back," she followed him through a gap in the bushes.

For a few minutes Glenna could hear the crackling of sticks and dry limbs, an occasional bark from Pal, and finally all was quiet. She sought to divert herself by observing the antics of a large, grey squirrel.

The minutes lengthened into a long interval. Glenna became increasingly uneasy. Listen as intently as she might she could hear no sound. She began to wonder if harm had befallen the girl.

And then from a long distance away she heard Lois' muffled cry:

"Glenna! Glenna! Come here! I've found something!"

CHAPTER XVI

PAL LEADS THE WAY

GLENNA struggled through the underbrush, wondering which way Lois and Pal had gone. Soon she came upon an indistinct path, but one well enough trodden to indicate many persons had passed that way. She followed it a short distance and came to a small clearing. There she stopped short.

Directly in front of her, one wall built against the side of a cliff, was a lean-to, constructed of old boards and driftwood. Lois and the dog were nowhere in evidence, but as Glenna walked on, they appeared in the doorway of the shack.

"See what I've found!" Lois cried. "Someone has been living here."

"Isn't anyone around?" Glenna asked in a low voice as she came up to the strange looking habitation.

"I can't find anyone," Lois declared. "How long do you suppose this little house has been here? And who lives in it?"

"Mrs. Horn's tramp, I suppose."

Glenna stepped to the doorway and looked inside. The shack had only one small room, and the ceiling was so low a tall person would strike his head if he did

not stoop. Obviously, the lean-to had been constructed with few tools. Large gaps between the boards had been chinked up with old rags.

On the floor several woolen blankets had been spread over a bed of boughs. A man's coat hung on a nail by the doorway, and there was a suitcase setting against the wall.

"It's locked," declared Lois, following Glenna's gaze. "And there are no letters or personal papers in the coat."

"You looked?"

"Naturally," Lois said, unabashed. "It appears that whoever built this shack intends to make quite a stay. And since Ghost Gables is so close, you owe it to yourself to learn everything you can about the man."

"I don't like to have a tramp so near the premises," Glenna admitted.

Having completed their inspection of the interior, the girls went outside. A crude stone fireplace stood not far from the door, and Lois bent down to touch the ashes.

"Still warm," she said.

"And here is the remainder of his meal," Glenna observed, indicating a pile of burned potato skins and a blackened coffee pot filled with strong looking brew.

"I couldn't really blame a man for taking a few potatoes if he were hungry," Lois commented. "It seems to be the only food he had."

"The potatoes weren't much good anyway. They had started to sprout."

Having completed their inspection, the girls called Pal and retraced their way to the banks of the river.

"I wonder if I should report to the police?" Glenna said reflectively.

"Why don't you just keep watch of the place?" suggested Lois. "After all, the fellow, whoever he is, hasn't done anything so very dreadful."

"No, but if he would take potatoes he might steal other things. And I have the girls to think about. It wouldn't be safe for them to be abroad after nightfall."

"I suppose you are right," admitted Lois.

The girls turned toward Ghost Gables. They had not walked very far when Pal began to bark. Someone was coming down the path. The person abruptly halted and as Lois and Glenna swung into view, stepped back into the bushes, but he did not move quickly enough to avoid being seen.

"Who is it?" called Lois sharply. "Come out, please."

She held Pal tightly by the collar. There was an agitation of the foliage, and a man of early middle age, stepped into view. His skin was browned from exposure to wind and sun and he wore a neat fitting outfit comprised of hiking boots, whipcord trousers and a dark shirt.

"I beg your pardon," he apologized, and the girls detected a twinkle in the blue eyes which squinted at

them. "I really had no intention of startling you."

"We—we thought you were a tramp," Lois stammered, laughing in relief.

"A tramp?" repeated the man. "I guess some might call me that."

"But you don't look—that is—" Lois began to founder. "Are you the owner of that lean-to back in the woods?"

"I built it," the man admitted. "I didn't think anyone would care if I stayed there a few weeks so long as I didn't bother anyone."

"Pal ran away with your hat, and we took it back," Lois explained. She added significantly: "We couldn't help noticing that you had potatoes for your lunch."

"Well, yes, I did," he replied frankly. "In fact, I've just about lived on potatoes the past week. The good people who live in that house yonder—" he jerked his thumb in the direction of Ghost Gables—"were obliging enough to leave a half bushel of discarded ones in the shed."

"That happens to be my house," said Glenna. "And the potatoes weren't discarded."

The man regarded her with surprise, but whether it was feigned or genuine the girls could not tell.

"Your house?" he questioned.

"Yes, I rented it to serve as a rooming place for students," Glenna replied, and then realizing there was no occasion to explain anything, became silent.

"So I add theft to my long list of growing crimes," the man smiled. "I assure you, Miss—?"

"Brockman," supplied Glenna.

"I had no intention of stealing the potatoes," the man finished. "I honestly thought they had been thrown away."

"But why were you in the shed?" Glenna asked severely. "You had no right to be there."

The man avoided her glance.

"I was just looking around."

"I can't allow that, you know," said Glenna. "I could report you to the police."

"Please don't do that," the man requested. "I'll probably be drifting on in a day or so. Maybe I'll pick up and leave today. I don't know why I came to this town anyway—it was a mistake."

"You sound rather discouraged," Glenna observed in a more sympathetic tone.

"Why shouldn't I be?" the man shrugged. "No home, no friends, no job. I've been out of work for over a year now, and I am beginning to look pretty seedy."

"How long have you been living in the shack?" Glenna inquired.

"Oh, about ten days."

"And have you ever visited our house after nightfall? The reason I ask is that Mrs. Horn, my housekeeper,

thought several times she had seen someone on the premises."

"Well, I have walked through the garden once or twice," the man admitted.

"Then you must have been the ghost!"

"I've been called quite a few names in my life," the man smiled, "but no one ever accused me before of being a ghost."

"Oh, it's just a story that the house is supposed to be haunted," Glenna explained. "We have become so nervous that anything white moving around after nightfall gets us excited."

"I see," said the man. "What sort of ghost is your house reputed to have?"

"I really don't know," said Glenna. "You might call it the ghost of memory."

The man stared into space for a moment, seeming to forget the two girls. Then recollecting their presence, he said:

"Well, I am sorry to have caused you any annoyance, Miss Brockman. I'll get my duds together and skip."

"Where will you go?"

"Oh, one place is as good as another. Only I'll stick to the country. Cities oppress me. I like shadowy highways, a singing river, and the music of the wind in the pine-tops."

"You must be something of a poet," observed Glenna.

"No, I am nothing at all."

The man started to move on down the path, but by now Glenna did not wish to drive him away.

"Wait," she said. "You've not even told me your name."

"My name? Oh, Bill Roth."

"Would you like work if you could find it?"

"Of course."

"I can't offer you very much," Glenna told him. "But at least I could see that you have three square meals a day. The work wouldn't be hard. I need the yard mowed and raked, and the windows washed. There would be enough to keep you busy for two or three days."

The man hesitated so long that the girls thought he intended to refuse. But he said quietly:

"Yes, I'll take it."

"Whenever you are ready to start in come to the house," Glenna directed. "Mrs. Horn will tell you what to do."

The girls walked on toward the house. Glancing back over her shoulder, Lois saw that the tramp had not moved. He was standing where they had left him, staring out across the river.

"I don't know what Mrs. Horn will say when I tell her I've hired a hobo," Glenna remarked. "I certainly never intended to do such a thing. But he seemed a rather worthy person."

"Yes, he talked like a well educated man," Lois agreed. "I suppose it's just a case of hard luck."

Mrs. Horn was dismayed when she learned that Glenna had employed Bill Roth to do odd jobs around the house, but she became sympathetic upon hearing that the man had not had enough to eat.

"I'll cook him a hearty dinner," the housekeeper promised. "If he is a good worker we can use a man about the place for a few days."

Bill Roth soon put in an appearance and was set to washing windows. At first, Mrs. Horn kept a watchful eye upon him. Convinced that he was doing his work well, her vigilance gradually relaxed. Yet more than once, when he was unaware of her scrutiny, she stared curiously at his face.

"I keep thinking I've seen that man somewhere," she remarked to Lois. "Maybe we have employed a criminal."

"He acts like a perfectly respectable citizen," smiled Lois. "But I agree with you, there is something familiar about his face. I feel as if I, too, had seen him before."

Later Mrs. Horn went out into the yard and talked with Bill Roth. He answered her questions willingly enough, telling her he had been born in Trenton, New Jersey. Following the war he had spent several years in a veteran's hospital and upon his discharge was unable to do indoor work.

"A lung condition," he explained briefly. "I worked

in the oil fields for a time. Then business became bad. Lately I've just drifted."

"Somehow I thought maybe I had seen you before," Mrs. Horn declared.

"Couldn't very well be unless you've lived in New Jersey or Texas. I've spent most of my life in those states."

Mrs. Horn shook her head and went back into the house.

"I believe I'll go down to the store and buy a nourishing steak for dinner," she told Glenna. "That poor man looks as if he would relish a good meal."

Bill Roth went on washing windows with methodical efficiency, and in Mrs. Horn's absence, the house became depressingly quiet. Carol and Florence were both away, and Marcia had locked herself into her room to study.

"Guess I may as well be traveling toward home," Lois remarked.

"Sorry I can't provide more entertainment," Glenna smiled, walking with her to the door. "If you'll wait until the girls get here, maybe we can play bridge."

"Oh, I have work to do at home anyway," said Lois. "I am supposed to scrub out the basement."

Before she could leave, however, the two girls observed Carol hurrying down the street. She carried an edition of the college paper in her hand, and upon seeing Lois and Glenna, waved it.

"I have some news for you!" she exclaimed breathlessly, running up on the porch. "Or perhaps you've heard!"

Glenna shook her head. "Nothing of importance has filtered our way."

"It's about Marjory."

"She hasn't been expelled?" demanded Lois, her tone implying it would be no more than one could expect.

"Rather not," Carol replied emphatically, opening the paper so that the girls could read for themselves. "Her picture is on the front page. She has won the Walker prize!"

CHAPTER XVII

A DISCOVERY

"WHY, that is splendid," Glenna declared after her first moment of surprise. "I truly am glad. Marjory's music meant so much to her."

"Winning the Walker prize would mean a lot to anyone," said Carol. "A trip to Europe for one thing. She will study in Germany a year with all expenses paid."

"I should like to be in her shoes," said Lois. "Somehow I never thought she had the stuff to do it."

"Why, Lois," reproved Glenna.

"Well, I didn't. Marjory played the piano beautifully, but she hated to work. I never thought she'd spend enough time or thought upon anything to win a prize."

"You were mistaken," said Carol. "Professor Gillman, head of the music department, declares in this article, that Marjory's selection is the most original ever submitted for the Walker prize. From a technical standpoint he pronounces it perfect."

"What is the piece called?" questioned Lois.

" 'Dance of the Wind.' "

"I'd love to hear the selection played," Glenna declared.

"You will have an opportunity next week," Carol informed them. "Professor Gillman has made it into an orchestration, and the selection will be presented at the Spring Concert."

"I shall certainly attend," Glenna announced. "How about you, Lois?"

"Oh, I suppose I'll go," the younger girl answered, but without enthusiasm.

"I do envy Marjory," Carol sighed. "In addition to all the honors heaped upon her, she receives a cash prize which will give her plenty of spending money while she's in Europe. And a music publishing house is negotiating to buy the piece. She'll be known throughout the country!"

"It seems we had genius in our presence and never suspected it," Glenna smiled. "I wonder if she would resent it if I telephoned my congratulations?"

"I wouldn't do it if I were you," advised Carol. "I happen to know that she still resents being sent away from here."

"She should be grateful to Glenna," said Lois. "Probably at the dormitory they made her buckle down and do honest work. Certainly she never would have accomplished anything here."

"I was surprised myself that she won the prize," admitted Carol. "The last time I talked with her, she

was very dissatisfied with her score. But it took the prize, and now the sororities will rush her and she'll be the Queen of the campus."

"I don't begrudge Marjory her success," said Glenna. "Perhaps I shall forego the congratulations, considering how she feels toward me, but I shan't miss the concert."

In the days following, a great many stories appeared in the college paper, mentioning the coming Spring concert. Lois and Glenna bought tickets early, but even so were forced to take seats only six rows from the back of the auditorium.

"For two cents I wouldn't go," Lois told her friend. "I met Marjory on the street today and she cut me dead."

"I haven't seen her since she left this house," Glenna said. "But from what I hear, her success has rather turned her head."

"Turned it! I would say it's just about twisted into a bow knot. I never did like Marjory, and I'm sure I'll hate her music."

"You're not jealous?" teased Glenna.

"Certainly not," retorted Lois indignantly, "but I wish a more deserving person had won the prize. Two girls I know worked three solid months over their entries. All they received was honorable mention while Marjory just dashed off a little ditty and won."

"It may not have been as easy as that. We can't estimate how long she worked on her entry."

"We know she spent precious few hours on it here, so she couldn't have devoted much time to it. I say there's no justice."

Despite her declarations to the contrary, Lois had every intention of being present at the concert. Yet the feelings she had voiced were shared to a lesser extent by many persons on the campus. There was an undercurrent of talk that favoritism had governed the selection of the prize winning composition—rumors quite unfounded, since the contestants' names had been unknown to the judges.

A week elapsed during which Bill Roth remained at Ghost Gables. He was a willing worker and more than earned the small sum which Glenna paid for his services. Mrs. Horn fed him well, and was pleased because he began to look better. Yet, it worried them both because the man slept in the lean-to which offered scant protection from the cold nights.

"Even the old garage would be warmer than that place," Glenna declared. "I wonder why we couldn't clean it out and put in a cot."

With this thought in mind she and Lois inspected the building one afternoon. No car had stood in the garage for more than twenty years, and there was evidence it had been used as a general storeroom even before that time.

Barrels and boxes filled with old dishes and cooking utensils were stacked one upon the other. An ancient

lawn roller occupied a corner of the room while rusted garden tools hung in a jagged row against the wall. Everything was covered with cobwebs and dust.

"It would be a real undertaking to clean this place," Glenna remarked. "And I don't know what we could do with all the junk."

Lois had lifted a dirty, rotted piece of canvas to see what lay beneath it. As she gingerly pulled away the cloth, trying not to ruin her clothing, an old canoe was exposed to view.

"Well, you have found something!" exclaimed Glenna.

"The canoe must have belonged to Terry," Lois stated in awe, stooping to pick up one of the paddles. "Doesn't it give you a queer feeling just to see it here?"

"With Terry dead—yes. It makes one think of Eugene Field's poem about Little Boy Blue."

After a moment of silence Lois said: "Mrs. Reid must have felt very bitter never to have returned here."

"Perhaps she couldn't bear to see anything which reminded her of Terry," replied Glenna. "Imagine how you would feel if you parted from your son in anger and then he was killed in the war."

"She might at least have forgiven Professor Kohler," declared Lois. "I think it was mean to go on punishing him for something that wasn't his fault."

"Are you sure she did?"

"Well, from what Mrs. Breen told me, they have

been estranged ever since Terry disobeyed his mother's wishes and went off to war. I suppose after the boy was killed, Mrs. Reid just took the attitude it was her brother's fault."

"We don't know all the details of the story," said Glenna, "so we have no right to judge. Could this canoe be used again, do you think?"

"I doubt it," said Lois with a critical glance. "Like the one hoss shay it's ready to fall to pieces all at once. The seams are wide enough to let in a barrel of water."

She tilted the canoe so that she could glance down into its interior. Light from the dusty garage window revealed a yellowed piece of paper lying in the bottom of the craft. Noticing that it looked old, Lois picked it up.

"What is it?" inquired Glenna.

"Why, it seems to be a letter or a note," replied Lois. "At least it has writing. But I can't make out the words."

They took the paper outside and blew off the dust. Lois glanced at the end of the page and gave a little cry.

"Terry's name is signed at the bottom!"

"So it is," said Glenna in awe, peering over Lois' shoulder. "It seems to be a letter. Oh, my dear, *a letter addressed to his mother!* Do you think we should read it?"

"Wild horses couldn't keep me from it," Lois an-

swered, almost fiercely. "Why, Glenna, it's our duty. This note might contain information of vital importance. And for all we know, we may be the first persons to see it."

"That might be true," Glenna acknowledged, looking startled. "How do you suppose the letter came to be in the canoe?"

Lois did not answer for she was reading the message. Many of the words were so faded that she could not make them out, but she was able to guess from the nature of the lines which had gone before.

"Glenna, just listen," she said, and began to read aloud:

"'Dearest Mother: We have had bitter words but I cannot go away without making one last appeal for forgiveness. I am leaving this message here in my canoe where you will find it after I have gone.

Please do not blame Uncle Jeff, for he had nothing to do with my decision. I am certain that I have made the right choice and in later years I believe you will be proud that your son fought for the cause of democracy.

Wherever I am, your picture will be with me, your image in my heart. Forgive me, mother dear, and remember me always as your devoted,

Terry.'"

Lois finished the letter, and carefully folded it. Neither girl spoke for several minutes, and then Lois said:

"After receiving a message like that, how could Mrs.

Reid keep from forgiving both her son and Professor Kohler?"

"She couldn't have read the letter," Glenna spoke with conviction. "Probably Terry wrote it after he had left the house, and attached it to the canoe where he thought anyone entering the garage would be certain to find it. But Mrs. Reid may have closed up the place without going inside."

"And all these long years that message has been waiting for her."

"Yes, and Terry is dead. Oh, it's such a pathetic thing, Lois. I could cry."

"I feel the same way," Lois mumbled miserably. "In the story books, mysteries always end so happily, but in real life the worst usually happens. I wonder why?"

Glenna had no answer. She asked to see the letter, and silently re-read it.

"This may have been Terry's last communication to his mother," she said. "He probably waited and waited, hoping she would write that he had been forgiven."

"And Mrs. Reid may have waited too," added Lois. "She might have wondered why Terry never told her he was sorry about the quarrel."

"There is one thing in the message which seems important to me, Lois. Terry says his uncle had nothing to do with his decision to enlist for the war."

"Yes, if Mrs. Reid had known that she might not have been so bitter toward her brother."

"Lois, a moment ago you said it was our duty to read

this letter, and now, since we have, I feel we have assumed a responsibility."

"Just what do you mean?"

A determined light shone in Glenna's eyes.

"I intend to ask Mr. Clements for Mrs. Reid's address," she said. "I shall send this letter to her, and if it doesn't soften her heart, then nothing in the world ever will!"

CHAPTER XVIII

LOIS KEEPS A SECRET

GLENNA did obtain Mrs. Reid's address from the real estate agent, and the letter found in the canoe was duly dispatched to the former resident of Ghost Gables. The girls spent many hours speculating upon whether or not they would receive a reply, but days elapsed and no word was returned.

"Perhaps she didn't get the letter," Lois said.

"I put my return address on it," declared Glenna. "Surely, if it hadn't reached her, it would have been sent back to us by this time."

Term examinations tended to crowd the matter from Glenna's mind, and Lois was kept well occupied with plans for her graduation, especially since she had been chosen valedictorian for her fine work.

A girl who took little interest in her personal appearance, she suddenly became absorbed in the problem of clothes. She studied fashion magazines, spent hours wandering through the stores, and consulted Glenna about details of her wardrobe. She would have a white dress for the graduation exercises, a reception gown cut low in the neck, with a pair of very high heeled slippers.

And, strangely enough, her costume for the valedictory address gave her far more concern than the paper itself.

Glenna observed to Mrs. Horn that Lois' manners were improving. She took more care of her fingernails, combed her hair more carefully, and actually talked wildly of venturing to a beauty parlor.

Upon the day scheduled for the Ardmore College concert Glenna invited her friend to Ghost Gables for dinner so that they might attend the evening performance together. Lois arrived soon after five o'clock because she "believed in being prompt," as she explained to Mrs. Horn. Glenna had not returned from the library, so she was left with an hour to kill.

Finding the other girls too worried over the coming examinations to talk with her, she wandered out of doors.

"Lois, if you see Bill Roth tell him his dinner will be ready at five-thirty tonight," Mrs. Horn requested. "I am having it early so I'll be free to go to a picture show."

"He's probably down at the shack," Lois replied. "I'll walk over and see."

She disappeared into the woods and did not return. Presently Mrs. Horn saw Bill Roth in the yard, and called to him that dinner was almost ready.

"Did you see Lois?" she asked.

"Why, no," he answered in surprise.

"That's odd," declared Mrs. Horn, looking worried.

"She started down to your shack about half an hour ago."

"She went to my shack?" the man asked in a low tone. "Maybe I ought to go back there now."

He started to move away.

"No, eat your dinner first or it will get cold," advised Mrs. Horn. "Lois probably will be along in a few minutes."

She set out supper on the kitchen table, but Bill Roth's usual hearty appetite had deserted him. He scarcely touched the food. His gaze wandered moodily toward the river.

"Aren't you feeling well?" Mrs. Horn inquired.

"Yes, I am quite all right."

"Then, doesn't the food taste good?"

"Your cooking is always delicious, Mrs. Horn. I was just thinking—I should be moving along one of these days."

Mrs. Horn regarded him meditatively. She had noted the signs of increasing restlessness, and had wondered how soon the urge to "move on" would come.

"I understand how you feel," she said. "There's no future in a job like this. But we'll be sorry to see you leave."

"I'll hate to go," the man answered. "This place has been like home to me—the only home I've ever known."

He arose abruptly and went out into the gathering twilight.

"If you see Lois anywhere tell her to hurry back," Mrs. Horn called after him. "Dinner will be served promptly at six."

Very shortly after Bill Roth was out of sight the girl came into view, walking hurriedly. Entering the kitchen she seemed absorbed in her thoughts, and did not hear when Mrs. Horn spoke to her.

"What kept you, Lois?" the housekeeper inquired a second time.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," apologized Lois. "What did you say to me?"

"I asked where you had been. I was beginning to worry."

"Oh, I was down at the shack."

"All this time?"

"Well, I was waiting for Bill Roth," Lois answered vaguely, and escaped into the living room.

When Glenna came home a few minutes later she noticed at once that the younger girl seemed in a strange mood. During dinner she was by turns taciturn and animated. She would chat excitedly and then lose the thread of the conversation. Glenna watched closely but could not understand her behavior.

"What possesses you tonight anyway?" Glenna asked as they were ready to start toward the auditorium together.

"Maybe I have a dark secret," Lois hinted with a laugh.

"Well, I am beginning to suspect it. You're not worried about examinations?"

"Exams? Oh, no!" Lois was highly amused at the suggestion. "I might give you a little hint, Glenna. I am terribly excited, and it has something to do with our mystery!"

"Not the ghost?"

"No—and please don't guess any more! I learned something important today, but I don't wish to tell anyone until I am sure of my facts. When I have checked up, I'll tell you everything and I may have a splendid surprise!"

"Now you have whetted my curiosity," Glenna complained. "Why not tell me right this minute?"

"No can do," Lois grinned. "Just be patient for a day or so."

"I doubt if I'll enjoy the concert now. I think you're mean!"

Lois laughed but refused to reveal her secret. They arrived at the auditorium at ten minutes before eight, finding their seats at the rear of the hall. Exactly upon the hour, the doors would close and no one would be admitted until the first intermission.

Glenna glanced over the audience, nodding to many students whom she knew. She bent her head to whisper into Lois' ear.

"Don't look now, but Professor Kohler is sitting in our row—three seats away."

At the first opportunity, Lois turned to gaze at the professor who seemed quite unaware of her scrutiny. He studied the program with deep concentration.

"I am certain he recognized me," Glenna whispered. "Because he looked at me, and then looked away quickly."

The doors of the auditorium closed, and the great room became still. The orchestra played its first number which was greeted with polite applause, and then began Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 in E-flat. Lois tried to listen attentively, but the music did not move swiftly enough to hold her interest.

"I like swing better," she whispered to Glenna who gave her a stern glance.

Lois squirmed in her chair and glanced at Professor Kohler. He was listening to the music with rapt attention, now and then nodding his head as a movement was particularly pleasing. Save for two students nearby who were drawing cartoons on their programs, everyone else seemed interested too.

"My tastes must be low-brow," Lois reflected. "But I do wish they would bring on that 'Dance of the Wind.'"

Finally her patience was rewarded, and the orchestra conductor introduced Marjory Bennett to the audience

as the composer of the selection which had won the Walker prize award.

The girl bowed and smiled in a charming manner, and the footlights made the spangles of her formal evening gown glitter like diamonds.

"How stunning she looks," Glenna whispered admiringly. "Doesn't it make you feel proud?"

"Wait until we hear the music," Lois said disparagingly. "It may be terrible."

Marjory left the stage, and the orchestra began to play "Dance of the Wind." A hush fell over the audience as the deep tones filled the auditorium. Despite herself, Lois was awed by the emotional quality of the music; it gave her a delightful, tingly feeling in her backbone. Then, as the first movement continued at a quickening pace, she became aware of a familiar melody. She glanced at Glenna with startled eyes. The older girl was leaning forward in her chair, a troubled expression upon her face.

"Glenna, haven't you heard that piece before?" Lois whispered.

"It does sound familiar, but I can't seem to remember—"

"Why, it's Terry's melody—'Song of the River!'" Lois declared.

"It couldn't be," gasped Glenna. "Marjory would never do a thing like that. It must be her own music."

Both girls sat tense and alert to every tone, as the orchestra played on. Even Glenna could not doubt now that the melody was the same.

"I don't know how much license is allowed," she whispered to Lois. "Perhaps one may use another's melody—"

"Don't you believe it," retorted Lois. "It's a case of outright piracy! She must have thought we would be too stupid to recognize the song."

Glenna felt sick with shame for Marjory, reflecting upon the manner in which "Dance of the Wind" must have been written. The Walker prize had meant everything, even honor to the girl. She had tried to compose an original selection, and recognizing her failure, had taken the easy but dishonorable way.

The light in Terry's room was explained now. Marjory had wished to borrow the score for "Song of the River," and upon being refused, had taken the key from the vase and had entered the locked bedroom without permission. She might have stolen the original manuscript but it was more likely she had copied it.

Glenna did not wish to hear another note of the beautiful music. She glanced toward the exit, but the doors were closed and would remain so until the end of the first movement.

Her gaze wandered toward Professor Kohler, and with a shock it came to her that he, too, might have recognized the selection which was being played.

She saw that Professor Kohler did seem greatly agitated. He was leaning forward, his hands gripping the seat in front of him. His lips moved as if he were whispering to himself. Those who sat close beside him stared rather coldly, feeling no doubt that he was marring an otherwise perfect performance.

Then Glenna reached out to touch Lois' hand, for the professor arose from his chair as if to leave the audience. He took a step, gasped, and fell backward into his seat.

"My heart!" he mumbled. His head dropped and he slumped against the man who sat at his right.

CHAPTER XIX

FAMILIAR MUSIC

PROFESSOR KOHLER'S collapse created a minor panic at the rear of the auditorium. Glenna and Lois cleared the row in which they sat, and two men carried the instructor to the door. A dignified looking gentleman, obviously a doctor, joined the group.

"Carry him outside," he directed. "Stretch him on the floor until we can get the ambulance here."

"Professor Kohler's office is just two doors down the hall," Glenna stated.

She and Lois, both badly frightened, had followed the group from the auditorium.

"Then take him there," ordered the doctor.

Glenna ran ahead to open the door which fortunately, had not been locked. She had never been in Professor Kohler's private office before, but scarcely gave it a glance now, save to notice it contained a couch which would serve as a bed.

Professor Kohler was carried in and stretched upon his back. The doctor opened the windows and allowed only a few persons to enter the room.

"Shall I send for the ambulance?" asked Glenna anxiously.

"It may not be necessary," replied the doctor, feeling the professor's pulse. "He seems to be coming around now."

Professor Kohler stirred slightly and his eyelids fluttered open. However, just at that moment Lois gave Glenna a sharp nudge in the ribs, and with a nod of her head, indicated a painting which hung on the wall above the oak desk. It was a large portrait of Terry Reid.

"Well, did you ever!" Glenna murmured. "Could it be *our* painting?"

"It certainly looks like it," whispered Lois, unable to take her eyes from the picture.

The painting was the same size as the one which had disappeared from Ghost Gables. Glenna recalled that it had vanished many months before Professor Kohler had arrived in Ardmore, but he had made an earlier visit during the spring according to Mrs. Breen. Still, it scarcely seemed possible—

Her attention came back to the professor. His lips were moving.

"Terry—" he whispered. "Terry's music."

Glenna looked at Lois. Of those in the room, they alone knew the significance of the words. Professor Kohler had recognized the prize-winning composition as his nephew's work, and doubtlessly, the shock had brought on a heart attack.

For some time the man lay quietly upon the couch,

and then those in the room became aware that he was listening to a faraway sound. Even through the closed door the strains of the orchestra could be heard. Finally, with an effort, Professor Kohler spoke again.

"I shall protest," he mumbled. "'Dance of the Wind,' is not an original composition. The score was written years ago by my nephew. A great wrong has been done and I owe it to Terry's memory—"

"Don't try to talk now," advised the doctor. "You are exciting yourself."

"You don't understand," muttered the professor, trying to raise up from the couch. "The music they are playing now is Terry's music."

Lois saw that the doctor and the students who were gathered near the bedside, believed that Professor Kohler could not know what he was saying. Before she stopped to think of the possible effect of her words, the girl cried:

"It is true! The music was pirated, and Marjory Bennett has no claim to the Walker prize!"

A gasp of astonishment greeted this announcement, but taking no notice, Lois went on, speaking for Professor Kohler alone.

"And Terry isn't dead at all—at least, I don't think he is!"

"Lois!" Glenna cried in warning. "What are you saying?"

"I learned it only today! Terry still lives and I think I can prove it!"

The doctor was clearly displeased at Lois' unexpected declaration for it served to add to the patient's state of excitement. However, he could not protest at further details, for the professor became pathetically eager as he pleaded with Lois to tell anything she might know.

"I am sure there was some mistake about Terry being killed in the War," Lois said quietly. "A man has been working at Ghost Gables under the name of Bill Roth. I have every reason to believe he is your missing nephew, Professor Kohler."

"Oh, Lois," Glenna protested. "You have no reason to say such a thing."

"I do!" Lois insisted stubbornly. "It's the secret I told you about. Today when I went down to the shack to find Bill Roth, he wasn't there. But his suitcase was lying open, and right on top I saw a photograph of a lovely woman. Across the bottom were written the words: 'Love to my son, Terry.' "

Professor Kohler raised himself to a half-sitting position, and resisted when the doctor pressed him backwards again.

"My sister gave one of her pictures to Terry," he said. "And she wrote those words across it. I remember, Terry took the picture with him when he ran away. But the boy was killed in the War. I dare not hope.

The picture may have fallen into the hands of another person."

"I thought of such a possibility," Lois admitted. "But it seems to me the man bears a resemblance to that painting over your desk." She raised her eyes to the picture of Terry. "Not a marked one, perhaps, but his eyes are the same."

"Bring the boy to me," Professor Kohler murmured. "Please—at once."

"I will try to get him," replied Lois quietly. "But he isn't a boy now. Bill Roth must be nearly fifty years old."

"Terry ran away to war when he was only seventeen. Let me see, yes, he would be nearly fifty now."

"Can you locate this man?" the doctor questioned Lois.

"Yes, I think I can."

"Then it might be advisable to find him at once," suggested the doctor with a significant glance which conveyed that any failure would be certain to produce an undesirable effect upon the patient.

Lois promised to bring Bill Roth without delay, and she and Glenna left the office together. In the hallway, the older girl said nervously:

"You realize what you are doing, Lois? If your hunch should happen to be wrong, Professor Kohler might have another heart attack. It was a little unwise of you to tell what you did without absolute proof."

"I just know I am right," Lois declared. "All along Mrs. Horn has been saying Bill reminded her of someone, and I felt the same way. Today when I saw that picture of Mrs. Reid it came to me like a flash."

They hastened across the dark campus and on to Ghost Gables.

"Bill will be down at his shack," Lois declared, just before they reached the house. "We may as well cut through the woods now and save time."

Glenna was uneasy as they pushed through the dense foliage which overhung the path, and wished they had brought a lantern or a flashlight. The moon and stars provided faint illumination, and Lois knew the trail.

"You wait here," she said when they reached the first little clearing. "No use both of us ruining our shoes. I'll go on alone."

"Maybe he would hear us if we called," Glenna suggested.

They shouted several times, and upon receiving no reply, Lois went on alone into the thicket. She returned quicker than Glenna had dared hope, but Bill Roth was not with her.

"He's gone," Lois announced.

"Then he must be at the house, or possibly he went into town."

"Glenna, his suitcase isn't there. Everything has been cleared out."

"Everything?"

"Yes, I can't understand it. He didn't say anything to you about going away?"

"Not a word."

Thoroughly alarmed, the girls ran through the woods to the house. Their unexpected entry into the kitchen startled Mrs. Horn who was squeezing orange juice for breakfast.

"My, aren't you home early?" she inquired.

"Yes, we are," replied Glenna. "Have you seen Bill Roth this evening?"

"He talked with me not more than an hour ago," returned Mrs. Horn, her face becoming serious. "He asked me to thank you for your kindness—"

"Then he has left?"

"Yes, he built himself a raft and floated down the river on it. At least he told me that was what he planned to do."

"Come on!" Lois cried, without waiting to hear more. She fairly pulled Glenna from the house, and started to run.

"Where are we going, Lois?"

"To Dad's boat house. There's just a chance we can overtake Bill."

Lois was prepared to overrule any objections which Glenna might make, but she offered none.

"Yes, we must make every effort to find him," she declared. "Professor Kohler's life may be the forfeit if we fail."

"He may have given Mrs. Horn wrong information," Lois said anxiously. "We'll have to take that chance. I am terribly afraid Bill suspected I had seen that picture of his mother. He may have hastened his leave-taking on that account."

The McDonald boat house was locked. Lois, however, always carried a key in her pocketbook. She swung open the doors and quickly filled the tank of a small launch with gasoline.

"It's only a raft with a motor attached," she apologized. "Sometimes Dad uses it to patrol the river when a lot of canoes are out. But it's faster than paddling."

"Is it safe?" Glenna asked dubiously.

"Safe but damp. We ought to be in bathing suits. I'd advise you to take off your shoes and stockings."

They made a grotesque pair in their silk frocks, without shoes or stockings, perched on the flat raft. Glenna sat squarely in the center, and gripped Lois' arm for support. Water oozed up through the boards and splashed over the edges whenever a wave struck them, but they did not get very wet.

"Dad made this contraption himself," Lois explained. "A drowning person can be pulled aboard much easier than up into a boat, and then, of course, there isn't much danger of this upsetting."

The motor was noisy, and it seemed to Glenna that the steady putt-putt-putt sound must herald their coming for miles down the river. Lois steered into the

swift current and they shot downstream with surprising speed for such an awkward craft.

"Keep a close watch," Lois warned. "It will be easy to pass Bill in the dark."

The motor droned on. Presently, filling the tank from the reserve can she had brought along, Lois began to look anxious. They were using up gasoline faster than she had expected.

Then suddenly, Glenna sat up very straight, straining her eyes to see a dark object some distance ahead.

"Isn't that a boat or a raft just ahead?" she asked in a low voice.

"Yes, it is!" exclaimed Lois. "I believe—I hope it's Bill!"

She altered their course and in a few minutes they came close to the other raft which was being allowed to drift with the current.

"Ahoy there, Bill Roth!" shouted Lois, turning off the motor.

"Ahoy!" came the answering call.

The two crafts floated together, and Lois seized hold of the edge so that they would not drift apart.

"Well, if it isn't Miss Lois," the man murmured. "And Miss Glenna."

"Bill, what do you mean by running off and causing us so much trouble?" Lois demanded severely. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I am," he answered. "I just thought I would slip

quietly away. I guess it wasn't very grateful of me, but I never was much of a fellow to say good-bye."

"Just why did you decide to leave at night?" Lois questioned ruthlessly. "Couldn't you at least have waited until morning?"

"Well, my raft was ready, and the urge came to move on."

"You knew I saw that picture of your mother, didn't you?" Lois asked in a different tone.

"I thought you might have seen it."

"And you were afraid we would discover your real identity. You are Terry Reid, aren't you?"

The man did not answer for a moment, and then he said: "Yes, I am Terry Reid. I wish you had not learned the truth, but since you have, you surely realize why I cannot remain in Ardmore. It was a foolish whim, a longing to see my old home, which brought me back there."

"Terry, you must return with us," Glenna said, speaking for the first time. "You may not know this, but your uncle, Professor Kohler, is in Ardmore. He has suffered a serious heart attack and has been calling for you."

"Uncle Jeff in Ardmore?"

"Yes, you must go to him at once. Another thing, Lois and I learned that the letter you left for your mother never reached her—at least not until lately. We found it only last week in your old canoe."

"Then perhaps that was why she never wrote me when I was in the hospital. Those long, terrible years—"

"I am certain of it," Glenna said firmly. "Now will you come?"

"Yes," said Terry Reid.

He stepped aboard the motor launch, and giving his own raft a little push, watched it float away into the darkness.

CHAPTER XX

A STORY TOLD

As THE raft made slow progress upstream, Terry Reid asked many questions about his uncle, and in turn revealed facts of his own life.

"When I was seventeen I enlisted to fight in France," he said. "Uncle Jeff approved of my decision, but Mother was very bitter, and she erroneously believed that he had influenced me. She and my uncle had angry words, and I ran away. I took my mother's photograph with me and I have kept it always."

"The picture I saw in your suitcase," Lois murmured.

"Yes, I understood Mother's viewpoint and never blamed her for feeling as she did. After I left the house I thought that it was not fair of me to leave without some word to her, so I stole back and left the note in the canoe."

"Your mother never found the letter," Glenna told him once more.

"Such a possibility never occurred to me. I had no thought Mother would close up the house. Well, in France I saw active fighting. I was wounded and gassed. I wound up in a hospital and it was months

before I learned there had been a mix-up in records. I was listed as Bill Roth.

"As soon as I was able, I wrote my mother, but she never replied. The war ended, and I was sent back to a hospital in the United States. But still no one came to visit me. Finally I gave up."

"I can't believe your mother ever received the letter," declared Glenna.

"Perhaps you are right, but I concluded otherwise at the time. I decided that if Mother and Uncle Jeff wished to forget me, I would make no further claims upon them. I used the name of Bill Roth upon leaving the hospital.

"My long illness left me with a tendency toward lung trouble. Poor health forced me to give up one job after another and seek outdoor work. Then came the depression. I could find nothing to do, so I took to the road. If I had succeeded in business, I might have made another attempt to contact my mother, but as it was I preferred to remain unknown to all of my old friends."

"It was strange you weren't recognized when you finally returned to Ardmore," said Lois.

"I have altered greatly," replied Terry. "And I took pains to avoid persons who might remember me. Mrs. Horn was a constant hazard, however, and at last she became suspicious."

"Why did you come back at all?" questioned Glenna.

"It was a whim, an overpowering desire to see my old home. By this time I had learned that the house was deserted."

"Then you were surprised to discover it had been turned into a girls' rooming house?" asked Glenna.

"Well, yes, I did feel disappointed at first. But not after I learned all the circumstances."

The raft reached the McDonald landing, and as the three started across the campus at a swift walk, Lois mentioned Terry's former interest in music.

"How did you know that I was a musician?" he inquired quickly.

"Because we found the song which you composed," Lois replied.

"At one time I did look forward to a musical career," the man admitted. "If things had been different I should have liked nothing better."

"I believe matters *will* be different from now on," Glenna said, but neither she nor Lois mentioned that the stolen song had won the Walker prize.

At Professor Kohler's office they found a note in the door disclosing that the patient had been removed to his suite at the Cambridge Hotel. Arriving at the hotel some minutes later, they were led by a special nurse to the bedside where the professor sat propped up with pillows.

Bill Roth stepped to the bedside and their eyes met. The older man seemed bewildered for a moment, so vast a change had come over his nephew.

"And this is—" he said hesitantly.

"Terry, Uncle Jeff. Don't you know me?"

The light of full recognition blazed in the professor's eyes.

"Terry, you have returned! That voice—your smile—I would know them anywhere."

The two embraced and the girls felt that their presence no longer was required.

"I think we should go now," whispered Glenna.

"Yes," replied Lois softly.

The happy reunion which they had brought about gave the girls an exalted feeling, and as they walked back to Ghost Gables Lois remarked:

"Isn't it glorious, Glenna? I feel as if I were walking on air."

"And well you may," the older girl responded. "This is splendid—perfectly splendid. And they have you to thank for it all."

Still another surprise awaited the girls at Ghost Gables. Upon entering the house they observed that Mrs. Horn was entertaining a visitor, an elderly lady with white hair who spoke in a soft musical voice. Instantly the girls divined without being told, that she was Mrs. Reid, for her resemblance to Terry was marked.

The housekeeper presented Glenna and Lois, explaining that Mrs. Reid had arrived on the evening train from the East.

"Your letter brought me," the lady declared, smiling at Glenna. "I needn't tell you what it meant to me—receiving the note which my son had written. You see, we had quarreled bitterly, and I believed that he had died without forgiving me. You can't understand the heart-break, the anguish I have gone through."

Lois and Glenna glanced at each other, realizing that Mrs. Reid could not know her son still lived. They were afraid to break the news too abruptly, and so upon a pretext, called Mrs. Horn to the kitchen and revealed to her what had transpired that night. The housekeeper then gave the vital information to her old friend, softening the shock as much as she could.

Even so, Mrs. Reid was greatly excited, and begged the girls to take her at once to the Cambridge Hotel.

The reunion proved to be too much for her, and after a few happy moments with her son and brother, she fainted and was carried to the adjoining suite where she was placed in the care of a nurse.

Glenna and Lois were dismayed at the results of their "good news campaign," but in a few days both Mrs. Reid and Professor Kohler were feeling strong enough to call at Ghost Gables in company with Terry. Upon learning that the guests would arrive, the girls flew about cleaning up and getting ready.

"I declare, why do you think they are coming here anyway?" demanded Mrs. Horn. "It isn't to look at the house or nibble your fancy cake."

"I know," admitted Glenna, "but after all, this place belongs to Mrs. Reid, and she may not like the way I have taken care of things."

"She has seen the house once, hasn't she?" asked Mrs. Horn. "Anyway, I'm thinking she'll have more important matters on her mind than furniture and the like."

"Mrs. Horn," said Lois curiously, "I wish you would tell me something. It's about that key I found in the cupboard. How did it get there?"

"I picked it up in the basement," replied the housekeeper.

"And you knew that it unlocked Terry's room?"

"No, I never thought much about it," the housekeeper admitted. "It's just my way to save things."

Lois and Glenna were hopeful that Mrs. Reid, her brother, and Terry would be permanently united. When the visitors finally arrived it was plain to all that the old difficulties had been entirely erased, but the girls were eager to ask a number of questions.

"One mystery has never been cleared up," remarked Glenna. "The painting of Terry disappeared from the library here, and later we saw it in your office, Professor Kohler. Is it a duplicate or the same picture?"

"The very same," smiled the professor. "Upon my

first visit to Ardmore, many months ago, I learned that you, Miss Brockman, had taken over my sister's house. I did not approve of her decision to rent the place furnished, and it troubled me because Terry's belongings, especially the painting, were in the hands of a stranger. I still had my old latchkey. One night when the house was dark, I merely walked boldly in and took the picture.

"Had I been caught I should have explained. A disgraceful enterprise for a respectable old fellow like me! I kept the painting in my office, intending to take it with me to the University of Illinois when I return there next month."

"And why did you refuse me admission to your biology class?" Glenna inquired curiously. "Surely not because I was a freshman."

"No, I owe you an apology and I came here to make it. In truth, your connection with this house proved most painful to me. Had you been a member of my class I should have been reminded daily of the unhappy events which occurred here. Be assured there was no personal feeling involved."

Lois turned again to Mrs. Reid and said:

"Glenna and I often speculated upon why Terry's portrait hung with its face to the wall. If it isn't too personal a question, was it because he displeased you and ran away to war?"

"Yes," responded Mrs. Reid. "After Terry left, my

brother and I had a serious disagreement, and I am ashamed to say I blamed him for everything. At the time I closed up the house I was emotionally unstable. I locked Terry's room and turned the painting to the wall."

"Then I guess everything has been explained except the ghost," said Lois.

There was a brief silence before Mrs. Horn spoke.

"Since confessions are in order I suppose I may as well make mine. I regret to admit, Miss Brockman, I didn't approve of you at first. I thought you would damage Mrs. Reid's things, and I preferred an older person in the house if it had to be rented. So I told the girls about the ghost, and a number of times I put on my light colored cape and walked through the garden at night. I can't imagine why I did such a thing!"

"We quite understand," replied Glenna without revealing that the information was not new. "You were motivated by your deep loyalty to Mrs. Reid."

"Yes," nodded the housekeeper, "I knew how much she had suffered, and I didn't think it was right for anyone to try to learn the story when it would do no one any good. As it turned out, I was wrong. I am glad to say I never tried that ghost trick after I took over my duties here."

"Our next ghost was Marjory," said Lois, "and, of course, Terry after that."

"I did wander through the garden a number of times at night," the man admitted.

"I wonder what decision has been made in regard to Marjory?" Lois asked after a moment.

Several days earlier, Glenna, Lois and Professor Kohler had submitted a written report to the president of the college. A quiet investigation had followed their charges, with the result that it was proven beyond doubt that Marjory's entry in the Walker contest had been pirated from Terry.

"Haven't you seen the papers this morning?" inquired Glenna in surprise.

"No," admitted Lois. "Did the story come out?"

"It did," answered Glenna. "The prize award will be given to another student, and Marjory is publicly disgraced. I understand she has been expelled, although that wasn't in the story."

"I am sorry you aren't a student, Mr. Reid," Lois said to Terry. "I was hoping they would give the prize money to you."

"Well, as it turned out, I am to receive a reward even though I did nothing to earn it," he replied with a smile. "The publicity has brought my work to the attention of a number of prominent music publishers. Already I have received several good offers for 'Song of the River.'"

"And they are begging for more of his work," Mrs. Reid added. "Terry will go on with his music."

"I am fairly well launched now," Terry chuckled. "You see, I have a trunk of old pieces I composed as a young man, and the publishers have rashly promised to accept anything I send them."

Mrs. Horn served tea, and as the afternoon drew to a close, Glenna forced herself to bring up the subject of what disposition would be made of Ghost Gables.

"I am sure you will wish your lovely home back again," she said. "If you like, I will turn it over to you at the end of the month."

Mrs. Reid shook her head, and tears came into her eyes.

"No, my dear, we have talked it over and are agreed we wish you to remain here. We may build ourselves a new home. In any event it is our wish that you keep The Gables rent free as long as you stay at Ardmore."

Glenna was quite overcome by such generosity for she loved the old house, and secretly had felt a heartache to think of giving it up to its owner. Realizing that it would hurt Mrs. Reid if she refused, she graciously thanked her for the offer.

In many other ways Mrs. Reid was to express her gratitude to the girls. She spoke highly of them to Mrs. Breen, who in turn mentioned them favorably to her influential friends. As a result, their names were entered on the rushing lists of many sororities, and it was a foregone conclusion they were to receive invitations from literary societies and other worthwhile or-

ganizations. But this the girls could not know at the time.

In fact, Lois, who had just graduated from high school with honors, was more than a little worried about her future as a college freshman.

"I am so socially inept," she sighed to Glenna one afternoon when they were talking together. "I just know I'll be a misfit at Ardmore. I always go blundering ahead."

"But you have a way of blundering into the right thing always," Glenna answered with an affectionate smile. "No, Lois, you are one person who needn't worry about a future on the campus."

CHAPTER XXI

A SURPRISE FOR GLENNA

"I NEVER could make those fancy curlicues stand up right," said Mrs. Horn.

She squeezed the last thin ribbon of frosting from the pastry bag and stepped back to study the result of an hour's labor. The great three-decker cake bore mounds of creamy white icing decorated with pink rosettes, tiny scallops and graceful swirls. Across the center in large but uncertain letters were the words: "Welcome Home."

"Oh, it looks perfectly grand," praised Lois. "Anyway, Glenna won't be critical."

"No," replied the housekeeper warmly, "Glenna thinks only of a person's good intentions. That's why it is such a pleasure to do things for her."

Mrs. Horn wiped her hands on a dish towel and gazed reflectively out the kitchen window. Glenna had been away from Ghost Gables a full week now, having taken advantage of the brief interval between the end of the regular school year and the beginning of the summer session to visit her aunt in the country.

Was it only seven days? The girl could well have been gone for at least a month, so empty had the old house seemed in her absence.

"I've never known anyone just like her before," Mrs. Horn said quietly. "She's so thoughtful of others and expects so little for herself. When I think of the way I tried to keep her from staying in this house—"

"Now don't become sentimental just before Glenna arrives," laughed Lois. "Here, if you must weep, use my handkerchief."

"Who is weeping?" the housekeeper demanded with a sniff. "You just finish setting the table, young lady, and don't be giving me any more of your impudence."

"I'm sorry," Lois apologized, and with a wise smile she went into the dining room to make certain that everything was in order.

The table was beautiful with a damask cloth, polished silverware and gleaming glass. A low bowl of flowers served as a centerpiece, and for place-cards there were little white figures which represented ghosts.

Lois' gaze roved on to the crisp new blue and gold draperies which hung at the windows. The walls had been freshly papered in a Colonial design, while a tiny radio stood in one corner of the room.

"I surely hope Glenna likes all the changes we've made," she said aloud. "It seems perfect to me, but of course I am prejudiced."

"It will seem perfect to Glenna, too," declared Marcia Allen, coming quickly from the living room. "She should be here any minute now unless Carol and Florence miss her at the station."

The little welcoming celebration had been planned by Lois who had induced all the girls to remain at Ghost Gables until Glenna's return. Marcia was staying on for summer school, while Carol and Florence had been glad to linger a few days longer.

Glenna would return on the afternoon train. "Home Thursday at 5:25," her postcard had said, and the message gave Lois a queer feeling, for Glenna had underlined the word "home."

"She's here now!" cried Marcia suddenly as a taxi cab stopped at the curb. "Come on, everybody!"

Mrs. Horn discarded her apron and dusted the flour from her hands. Lois dropped a soft cloth with which she had been giving a final polish to a piece of silverware. Two newly arrived roomers who had come for summer school, tossed aside their novels and arose expectantly from the davenport.

As Glenna entered, escorted by Carol and Florence, each girl constituted herself a welcoming committee of one.

"Glenna!" shouted Lois, who followed a resounding kiss with an athletic slap on the back.

"Welcome home!" cried Marcia. "You're looking simply grand!"

Mrs. Horn relieved the girl of her wraps and introduced her to the new members of the household.

"Oh, it's good to be back again," Glenna said when she could get her breath. "You are all so sweet to me. I didn't expect to be met at the train, and now this warm welcome! I can't tell you how grateful I am."

"But Glenna," Lois said plaintively, "don't you notice anything *different?*"

The older girl's eyes went swiftly over the room.

"Why, you've papered in here!" she exclaimed.

"The entire house," corrected Lois. "Do you like it?"

"It's beautiful," murmured Glenna. She crossed the room and studied the pattern. "The design is lovely. And I like the colors too. But how—?"

"Don't you see anything else?" Lois demanded quickly.

"Oh, the draperies!"

The radiant girl ran to the broad front window and inspected the richly patterned folds.

"Mrs. Horn bought the material and made them all herself," explained Marcia.

"They are simply exquisite," praised Glenna. "They harmonize perfectly with the rest of the room."

"That's because we consulted an interior decorator," acknowledged Marcia. "We wanted everything to be just exactly right."

"You haven't seen anything yet," boasted Lois who

could not wait for Glenna to observe the various changes. "We have new towels in the bathroom. Green and black to contrast with the rose-colored walls."

"Rose walls," Glenna murmured weakly. "When I left they were just plain, smudgy gray."

"And the old tub is gone!" laughed Marcia. "You are now the proud possessor of a deluxe, streamlined model, and a shower as well."

"I'm so dazed I don't know what to say."

"Then don't say a word, just feast your eyes," chuckled Lois. "You've not even noticed the stair carpet or the new radio. It's a little gift from Mother, Dad and me. And we have a new furnace in the basement."

"Let's take her on a tour of inspection," proposed Marcia gaily.

The basement steps resounded with the clatter of hurrying feet, and Mrs. Horn, who remained above could hear a medley of young voices eagerly discussing the new heating plant.

"I don't understand it," Glenna declared when they were again in the living room. "How could you do so much in so short a time? And what is more puzzling, how did you pay for it? You didn't strike oil in the back yard by any chance?"

"We really have no right to take the credit," answered Mrs. Horn. "Terry Reid is responsible."

She then explained that the man had sent her a

check for three hundred dollars to be used to make repairs on the house.

"I guess he knew if he sent it directly to you, it would have been returned," she concluded.

"Oh, but I can't allow him to do such a thing!"

"It's done now," responded Mr. Horn dryly. "Anyway, this is still Mrs. Reid's house, so they have a right to make any repairs they wish."

"Yes, that's true," agreed Glenna. "For a moment I forgot. This house seems so like my own that I have become ridiculously possessive."

Significant glances passed between Mrs. Horn and the girls, but Glenna did not notice. The housekeeper said gently:

"Don't look so worried, my dear. If I hadn't thought it right, I wouldn't have used the money. Now run upstairs and freshen yourself up a bit. Dinner will soon be ready."

Glenna remained a long while upstairs, for the girls led her from room to room, pointing out the many improvements which had been made. While she did not say very much the look of gratitude in her eyes left them all well satisfied for the week of labor.

Presently Mrs. Horn announced dinner and Glenna was seated at the post of honor. In the soft glow of the candles her face was flushed with happiness.

"Oh, you have gone to such work," she declared. "And what a wonderful dinner!"

"You might say 'What a wonderful dinner, *Lois'!* I peeled the potatoes."

"And she set the table," added Mrs. Horn with a patient smile.

Finally the huge cake was brought in and placed before Glenna.

" 'Welcome Home'," she read softly. Tears came into her eyes. "This house really has seemed more like home to me than any other place I've ever known. It seems so much mine that I keep forgetting I am only borrowing it from Mrs. Reid."

Lois glanced at the housekeeper who went quickly to the buffet. From the top drawer she took a thick, fat envelope.

"I guess this is probably the right time to give it to you, Glenna," she said.

The girl took the envelope, turning it slowly in her hand. She saw that it contained an imposing collection of legal papers.

"You needn't bother to sign them now," went on Mrs. Horn. "But when you do, this house is really yours."

"Mine?" Glenna's voice was scarcely audible.

"It's a deed to Ghost Gables," cried Lois, fairly beside herself with delight.

"Mrs. Reid's gift to you," completed Mrs. Horn. "She decided that she wished to give you this property with no strings attached."

"A home truly my own." Glenna whispered the words. "I can't believe it."

"But it's true," cried Lois gaily. "Ghost Gables is yours forever and ever."

She glanced at the clock whose hands pointed exactly to the hour of seven, and sprang up to turn on the new radio. Tuning the station carefully she waited.

In a moment came the full-throated voice of the station announcer:

"And now, friends of the radio audience, we have the pleasure of listening to the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in a program devoted in part to the music of that promising young American composer, Terry Reid."

Glenna scarcely could believe what she had heard. The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra honoring the young musician in such a signal fashion seemed fantastic, unreal. She could not help but recall that Terry Reid had been a hopeless wanderer only a short time ago, and that he had looked upon the world as a place to be endured, under protest.

The girl came to herself with a start as the room was filled with beautiful music. There was an undercurrent of wistful adoration about the piece which faintly reminded her of certain passages in "Song of the River." Yet this composition possessed a finer, surer, more mature touch.

"Lovely," she murmured as the last strains died away.

"That was Terry's latest composition," Lois explained proudly.

"I knew from the very first the man was no ordinary tramp," said Mrs. Horn. "He had a far-away look in his eyes even when he was trimming the grass."

"And you thought it was hunger, didn't you, Mrs. Horn?" Lois broke in with a mischievous chuckle. "Well, it wasn't. It was music!"

After the program had ended, Lois and Glenna strolled alone into the twilight. Hand in hand they wandered slowly about the grounds. They paused before a bed of flowers; they craned their necks at a stately elm tree and walked tip-toe across the velvet lawn.

As a tenant, Glenna had accepted these things as a mere custodian, entertaining in them only a passing interest. Now that they were her very own, every blade of grass, every plant and blossom seemed to be almost a part of her.

"I never dreamed it would be like this," she remarked absently to her young friend.

"Meaning that you get a thrill in being of the landed gentry?" Lois asked slyly.

"It's a feeling I can't express in words, Lois. You would think me foolish if I tried. It's so intangible—a sort of filmy web of fancy."

"Better just be thankful you are your own landlord and let it go at that," laughed Lois.

Glenna did not reply. Scarcely aware of her companion, she stood gazing up at the eloquent yet silent old house.

The ancient gables seemed to look down upon her as if they were harboring memories of deeds and lives long past. And while Glenna did not believe in ordinary ghosts, it did not seem unreasonable to believe that free spirits might choose this place as a favorite rendezvous. Her own ghosts had all been explained away, but she could not escape the feeling that these walls had seen and heard things which were far beyond the ken of mortals.

Ghost Gables was still mysterious.

And it was hers!

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